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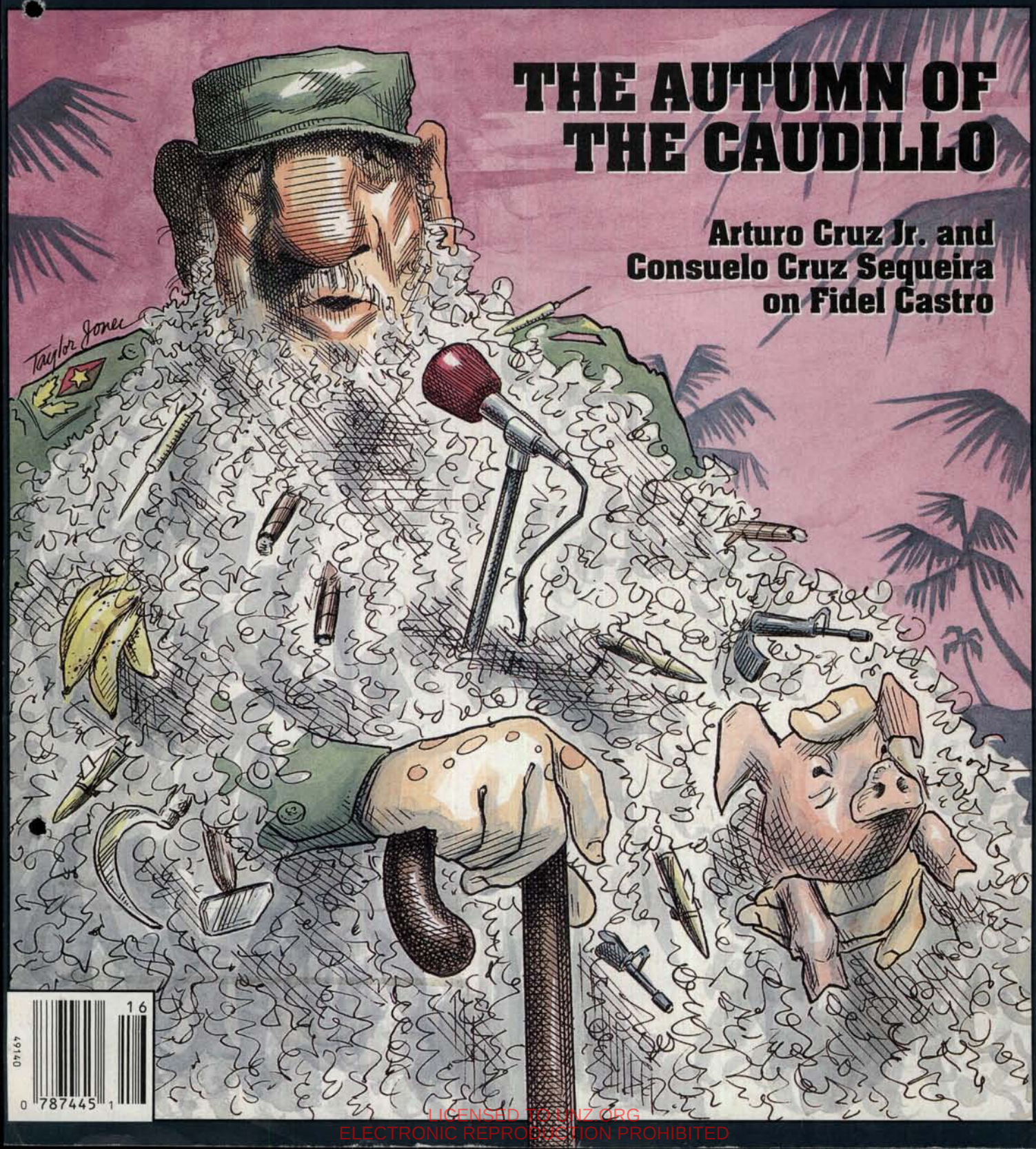

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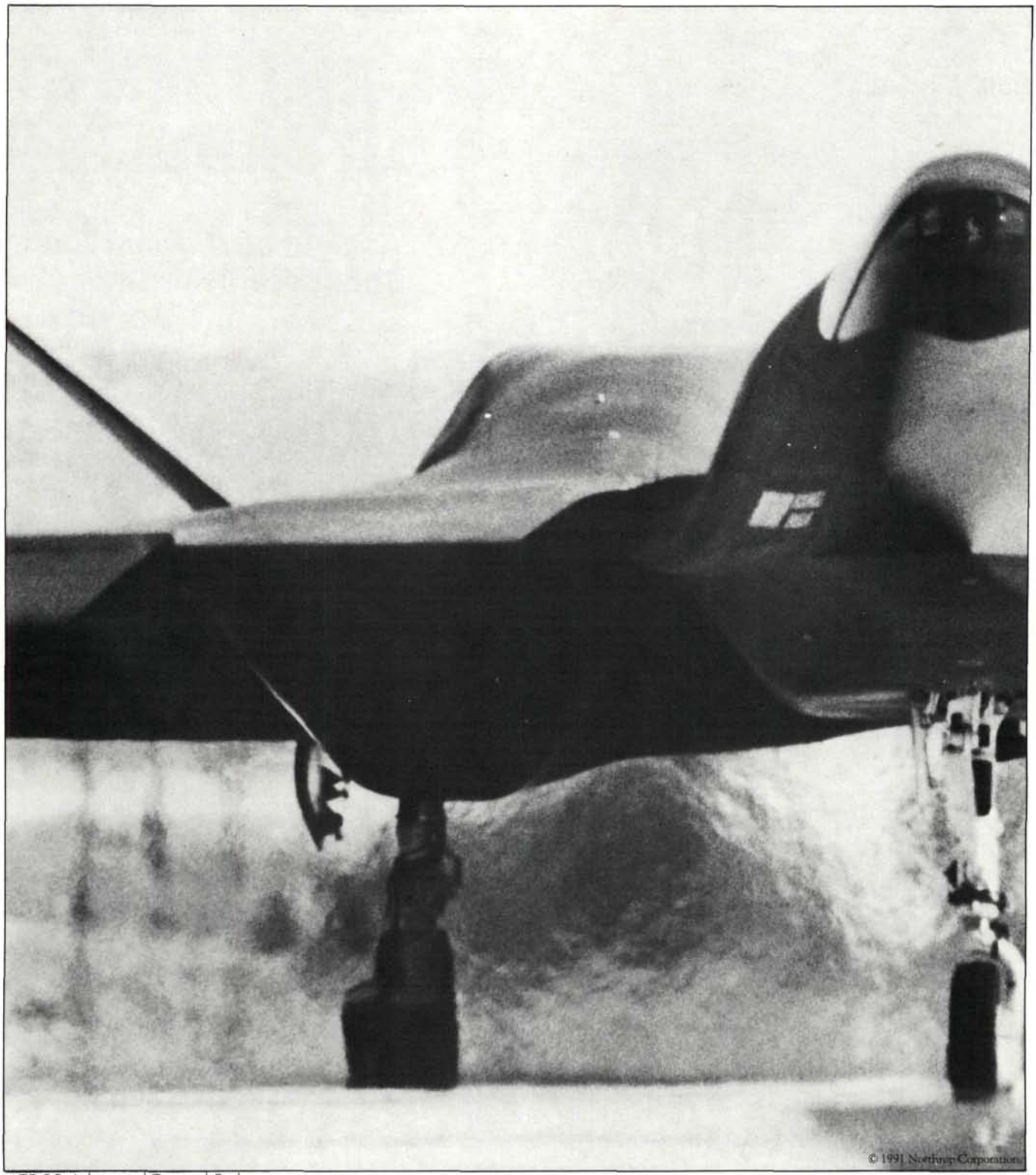

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FROM WASHINGTON

Mr. Fix-it

In his forthcoming memoir, *Counsel to the President* (Random House), Clark Clifford recalls consulting New Deal Brahmin David Lilienthal about the propriety of setting up as a Washington lawyer after leaving the Truman White House. Clifford quotes Lilienthal's journal: "I said of course he shouldn't go [back] to St. Louis, that the fact that others had been greedy and not too principled in how they practiced law didn't mean that he needed to, nor would he."

Clifford opened shop early in 1950. A phone call brought him his second client: "Mr. Clifford, this is Howard Hughes. . . . I have followed your career with interest and we all thank you for the contribution you have made to the nation. I understand you have gone into private law practice. . . ." But before signing Hughes up, Clifford says, he delivered "a well-rehearsed little speech" that he gave to every client:

> "[B]efore we proceed, there is one point I must make clear. I do not consider that this firm will have any influence of any kind here in Washington. . . . If you want influence, you should consider going elsewhere." Hughes said he understood my point completely.

Hughes understood, all right. "By the late spring of 1950," Clifford writes happily, "it seemed clear that the firm . . . would prosper." And indeed it did. Clifford & Warnke became one of the prominent Washington law firms of the postwar era. Clifford writes that he is "proud of my profession." But he adds stuffily that this is "law as I knew it . . . not necessarily the kind of work done by so many young lawyers in large firms today." Clifford settled into his role as "Washington's ultimate insider" (his publisher's description) and "the Democratic Party's pre-eminent wise man" (ditto).

Clifford's memoirs do not include the most famous anecdote, possibly apocryphal, about his law practice. That's the one about the client who is having trouble with a regulatory agency and asks Clifford what to do. Clifford advises, "Do nothing," and sends a bill for $5,000. The client calls Clifford and says, "At least tell me *why* I should do nothing." Clifford says, "Because I said so," and sends a bill for $10,000.

In the twilight of his career, at age 84, Clifford is now in trouble over his connection to a crooked foreign bank called BCCI. A group of investors associated with BCCI hired Clifford ten years ago to help them buy a bank here in Washington. BCCI had been refused permission to buy two other American banks, but Clifford assured regulators that BCCI would have no connection to this purchase. The sale was approved, Clifford became chairman of First American, as the bank was renamed, and his firm made millions in fees.

Lo and behold, it turns out that BCCI has actually been the secret owner of First American all along! In a hastily added footnote to his memoir, Clifford plays Captain Renault, straight out of *Casablanca*. He is shocked, shocked: "When I was first informed that United States law might have been violated, I was both appalled and embarrassed. . . . It was possible that I had been used, I realized with a combination of outrage and deep concern. . . ."

Two misconceptions color Washington's reaction to Clifford's distress. One is that this was an aberration in his distinguished legal career. The other is that Clifford's "smell detector" should have warned him off. What BCCI was buying from Clark Clifford is exactly what many of his clients have bought over the years: Washington respectability. Selling respectability is like living off the family silver: you have to dole it out sparingly, because once it's gone it can't be replaced. But you could say that Clifford's timing was perfect. He hoarded most of his respectability until the end, then cashed it in before it was too late.

When you're selling respectability, an oversensitive smell detector is no asset. Far more useful is the kind of monumental lack of curiosity that may yet save Clifford from total disgrace. Perhaps Clifford really didn't know that his clients were fronting for BCCI. But he did know that they were being "advised" by BCCI, and that BCCI was corrupt. Of course if they didn't have a little problem of some sort, they wouldn't have needed to hire Clark Clifford, would they?

Two decades ago Clifford rented his respectability to another bank, the National Bank of Washington, then owned by the notoriously corrupt United Mineworkers Union headed by Tony Boyle. Boyle hadn't yet been convicted of murder when Clifford graced NBW's board, but it surprised few when he was. *The Washington Monthly* had tried to shame Clifford into quitting, without success. Another lustrous achievement Clifford omits from

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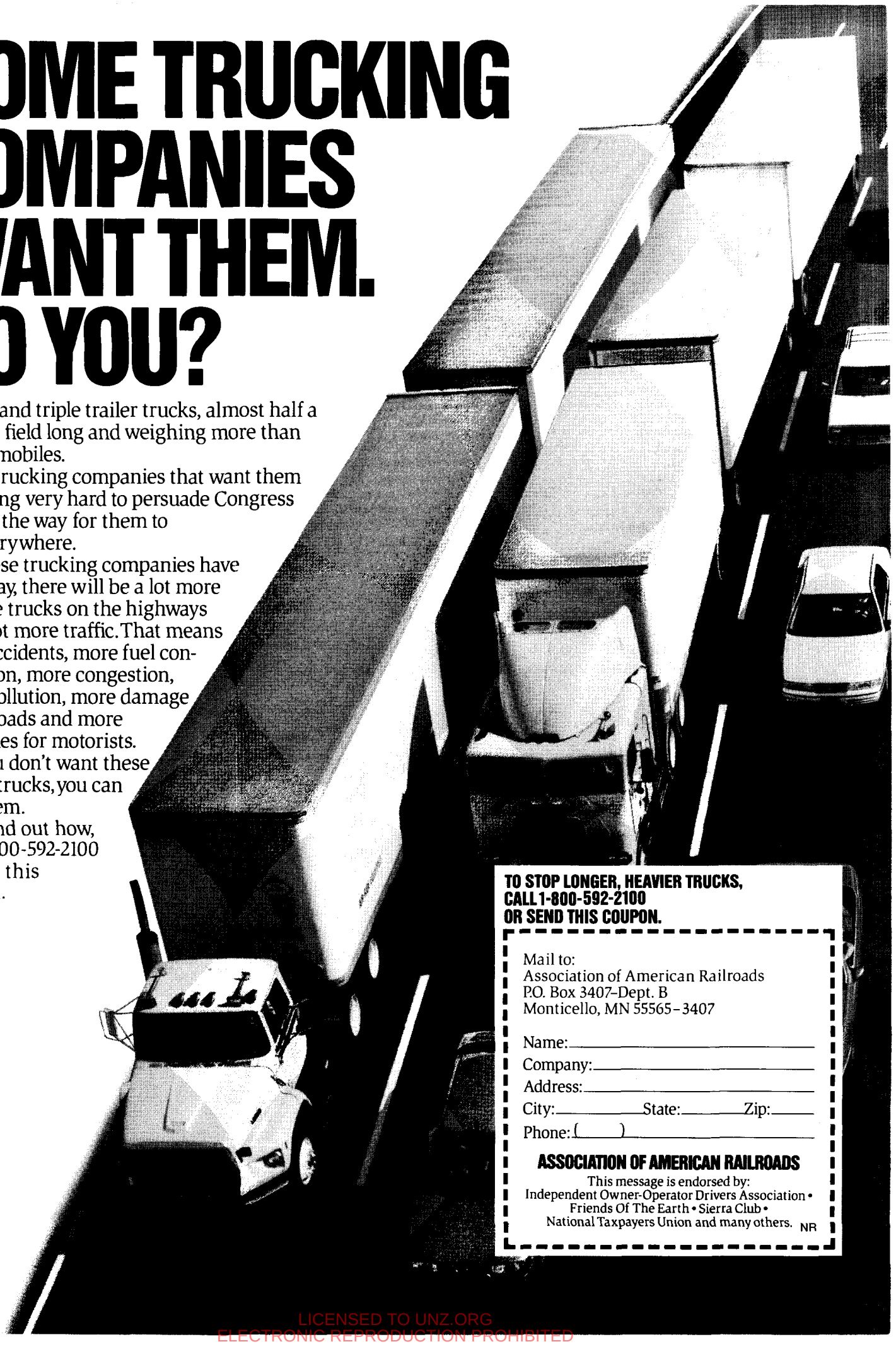

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CORRESPONDENCE

Bad mix

To the editors:

There has been a great deal of talk about preserving Iraq's territorial integrity and regional stability ("Rest in Pieces," editorial, and "Islam Dunk" by David Landes, April 8). It is not immediately obvious how two such disparate objectives can be reconciled. The proponents of this policy must be hallucinating if they think that a state as intrinsically unstable as Iraq can really make a significant contribution to regional stability. Isn't it more likely that the combustive mix of petroleum and myopia that ignited the present conflagration will erupt again?

Operation Desert Storm has just made the point: stability in the Gulf will require an extraregional dimension. Given the general propensity to trade petrodollars for weapons, a revitalized Iraq will eventuate a recrudescent Iraq, which will, sooner or later, invite a rerun of Operation Desert Storm.

MITCHELL FINKEL
Silver Spring, Maryland

To the editors:

This is not the first time, unfortunately, that I have had to write to protest the title inflicted on one of my contributions. In the old days, the person charged with that task had a penchant for alliteration. The alliteration has now stopped, but not the sophomoric straining to be cute and clever.

Much of this word play is harmless; but occasionally it does serious violence to the author's intent by altering the tone of the article. So with my recent piece on the historical aspects of the Gulf war. The published title, "Islam Dunk," is in bad taste. It is disrespectful of religion and distorts my intent in writing the essay; as a result, it will necessarily diminish its import. I'm sure THE NEW REPUBLIC doesn't want that any more than I do.

DAVID S. LANDES
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Warped

To the editors:

Michael Kelly ends his article "Highway to Hell" (April 1) with a statement that belies his emphasis on the high-tech nature of the war. He quotes an Army Special Forces officer: "No one ever said war was pretty. Chivalry died a long time ago." But just because medieval knights did not incinerate their foes in battle doesn't mean that excessive brutality is a result of the high-tech nature of warfare. The crematoria of the Germans in World War II is a stark testament to the ugly nature of all war, high-tech or not.

THOMAS BURK
Cypress, California
(Via 900 number)

Mother of all poets

To the editors:

It saddens me to learn that Mary Jo Salter ("A Poem of One's Own," March 4) fears that motherhood limits high poetic achievement. She ought to read her own work more often.

I could quarrel with her list of childless greats: Louise Bogan had a daughter, for one thing, and surely any list with room for May Swenson should have room for Adrienne Rich (mother of three). And really—Charlotte Mew? She wrote some wonderful poems, but to cite her as a discouraging example is reaching for a stick to beat oneself with.

The real question is why Ms. Salter takes so little comfort in the fact that today a hefty proportion of the most distinguished poets in English (including the formalists) are mothers: Louise Glück, Marilyn Hacker, Rita Dove, Sharon Olds, Carolyn Forché, Jorie Graham, Margaret Atwood, Eavan Boland, etc., etc. They may not all be Ms. Salter's cup of tea, nor are they all mine, but they're easily a match for their male contemporaries, and for the eclectic list of contemporary novelists she cites to show that mothers can scale the heights of fiction.

As a poet, I can think of about a thousand reasons why I may never be as good as Emily Dickinson. I am quite persuaded, though, that my three-year-old is not one of them.

KATHA POLLITT
New York, New York

Groundbreaking

To the editors:

Regarding Andrew Sullivan's reference to David Billington's distinguished book *The Art of Reinforced Concrete* on the

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 22, 1991

DANCES WITH WOLF

Even Miss Gertrude Bell, the willful British colonial servant who may be said to have been one of the founders of modern Iraq, knew that it wasn't exactly a nation. Indeed, by far the greater part of its populace has never thought itself Iraqi. The inclination of its subjects to cleave to more primordial loyalties—mostly Kurd and Shiite, to be precise—is not an asset for a regime purporting to be a nation. Baghdad has long been trying to compensate for this disadvantage by forcing recalcitrants into submission by terror or, failing that, by murder.

The history of independent Iraq began sixty-eight years ago with the destruction of just such a stubbornly self-conscious group: the Assyrians, an ancient Christian sect, who sought a modest autonomy from the Sunni elites. But this ambition was a hideous affront to Arab nationalism, under cover of which these elites ruled. As the British historian Elie Kedourie put it, "The account of the Assyrians was well and truly settled." The British did not even protest.

The Assyrians simply disappeared, along with the hardly less numerous Jews who made up the largest group in Baghdad at independence and who had been in Mesopotamia since the destruction of the First Temple twenty-five centuries earlier. But the Shiites (60 percent of the population) and the Kurds (20 percent), who are Sunnis but not Arabs, could not be so easily disposed of. And nobody in Baghdad really wanted to conciliate them either. Pluralism, alas, is not the genius of Arab politics. So when President Bush made his seemingly anodyne commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq, he was actually condemning the majority of the population to the murderous routines by which its rulers keep power. And, like the British before him, he would not even protest.

This week the fruits of this self-restraint were seen. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to what they hope is safety at the Turkish border, fleeing the state terror of Saddam. We do not pretend that, by intervention, the United States will somehow bring democracy to Iraq, but we can and should help prevent an attempt at genocide. Saddam, we know, has few scruples on this front. What remains for the four-and-a-half million Kurds who are still in Iraq beggars belief, but what we saw done to Kuwaitis in Kuwait, and what we know has already happened to the Kurds at the hand of Saddam, is cause for trepidation.

Analogy is not analysis, of course, but some analogies are inescapable and desolating. A few commentators have been reminded of the gruesome sequel for our Vietnamese allies after the last American helicopters left Saigon in 1975. Some invoke the spectral image of the Red Army cynically waiting outside Warsaw while the Nazis smashed the Polish resistance. Others recall that the United States had, over ten years, called on the Eastern Europeans to rebel against Soviet dominion and then, when the Hungarians did precisely that in 1956, stood by as Soviet tanks rolled over the young men and women of Budapest. Of course, there was then the risk of a nuclear conflict; moreover, some argue, we were not militarily positioned to push out the forces of the Warsaw Pact. These excuses do not hold now in Iraq. Nor can a president who sent troops into Panama merely to rearrange its internal affairs plausibly take refuge in a principled refusal to do so elsewhere.

Mr. Bush urged the peoples of Iraq to rise up against Saddam. When they did, he turned his back on them. We have turned our backs before: in 1975, when we joined the Shah of Iran in seeking a border agreement with Saddam that sold out the Kurds; in 1988, when Saddam gassed the Kurds while the West averted its eyes. Now we have incited them to revolt and still betrayed them. We even reneged on the pledge we had made—to them and to ourselves—that U.S. forces would not permit Iraqi helicopter gunships to fire. General Norman Schwarzkopf says he was suckered into thinking the Iraqi army would use the helicopters only to move troops from the war zone. Well, if he was suckered he can do something about it. (The American people seem to understand this, though their president does not; indeed, even Senator George Mitchell sees the logic of it.) At least Schwarzkopf is willing to acknowledge that the United States chose a strange moment to end the fighting: a few more days of pursuit

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might have ended not only the threat Iraq had posed to its neighbors but the threat it posed to its own subjects as well.

"The territorial integrity of Iraq" is one of those totemic banalities of Middle Eastern politics. It is invoked as if it were an intrinsic moral purpose. The contrary is the truth. As long as Iraq exists within its present frontiers, masses of its people will be forced to live under a regime whose habits are those of butchers. (The king of Jordan and the Palestinians may be sudden converts to territorial integrity—but their enthusiasm for Saddam's pillage of Kuwait tells us all we need to know about principle in this part of the world.) There are reasons why Sunni Saudi Arabia cares not a fig for the captive populations of Iraq: the Kurds are not Arabs and the Shiites are the enemy. But Saudi Arabia is dependent on us, not we on it. Saudi prejudices need not be ours.

As it happens, the fears about a dismembered Iraq are mostly wrong. A Shiite political entity in southern Iraq would not be a satrapy of Iran. The deep fault-line among the Shiites between Persians and Arabs guarantees that. This doesn't mean that a Shiite entity won't be a Shiite theocracy. But even if it were, it could scarcely be more cruel, more arbitrary, than the current regime.

With the Kurds we have committed a perhaps greater wrong. Our betrayal is a human tragedy and an ethical disaster. If any people in the Middle East warrants self-determination or something very close to it, it is the Kurds: a venerable people with their own language, customs, memory, and indigenous soil. They threaten no one but the regime that has gassed and now massacres them. Yet President Bush cannot address their agony, preferring to spend his time ensuring that our U.N. delegate join the condemnation of Israel for deporting four Gaza Palestinians inciting mayhem and murder. His obsession with the Palestinians seems curious, given the ease with which he forgets the Kurds. Night is falling on the captive populations of Iraq. But be consoled: there is a bright morn for the emir of Kuwait.

EX CATHEDRA

The sight of Mayor David Dinkins marching with a group of Irish gay men and lesbians in New York's St. Patrick's Day parade will not soon be forgotten. The mayor stumbled into his stand, to be sure, eager to please a plaintive interest group. But as the jeers, insults, and projectiles of the bystanders greeted him, he clearly began to understand the significance of the event. When several members of the reviewing stand turned their backs on him as he walked by, the mayor may have been enlightened still further. He said later that he had been reminded of the ethos of the early civil rights movement. So were we.

It may come as something of a surprise, then, to find that a minor strain of the press reaction to this event was to accuse the *mayor* of bigotry: bigotry, that is, against Catholics. The columnist Patrick Buchanan argued that "the mayor had it coming. . . . He preaches sensitivity to minorities, but thinks it a manifestation of morality to offend, insult, and outrage Irish Catholic traditionalists by prancing with sodomites in front of them." He went on: "A visceral recoil from homosexuality is the natural reaction of a healthy society wishing to preserve itself." He further argued that prejudice against homosexuals was "rooted in the inherited wisdom of the race."

John Cardinal O'Connor of New York made his views known on the subject by boycotting a dinner attended by Mayor Dinkins the night before the march, and by accusing the gay and lesbian marchers of showing "disrespect" for the Church by the mere act of attendance. In a subsequent column in the diocesan weekly *Catholic New York* he declared that the world inevitably hates Catholics for taking principled stands. He cited Jesus' prediction to the disciples that "the world will hate you . . . as it hated me before you." Moreover, his Eminence asserted that "columnists and editors who are censored [sic] for ethnic slurs or attacks on virtually any other people can romp all over the place at the expense of Catholics who dare to publicly uphold their faith, without a murmur from publishers or owners."

It's depressing enough that these reactions reveal an unquestioning acceptance of various prejudices about homosexuals—that gays are ipso facto irreligious, that "they" somehow exist in contradistinction to "us," that "sodomy" defines gay identity. What they also reveal, however, is a misreading of Catholicism. Mr. Buchanan's "visceral recoil" from homosexuality has nothing to do with the teachings of the Church. The cardinal's decision to call the march of homosexuals in a parade a sign of disrespect to the Church has nothing to do with Catholic doctrine either.

As it happens, homosexuality is not a sin in Catholic theology. Indeed, since a 1975 pronouncement by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Church has expressly held that homosexuality is involuntary and therefore *cannot* be a sin. (This position was widely held in the Church until the Third Lateran Council in 1129, which stigmatized Jews as well as gays.) What *is* sinful, in the eyes of the Catholic Church is sexual activity outside marriage, which includes both extramarital heterosexual and homosexual sex. No gay man or woman, therefore, is inherently sinful to Catholics. In the current draft of the new universal catechism, Catholics are even specifically enjoined to welcome gay people into their congregations. Celibacy is still enjoined for gays—as it is for unmarried heterosexuals and priests. But this is part of the general Catholic teaching about sex, and not an endorsement of homophobia.

The intolerance of the parade organizers who turned

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their backs on the mayor and his gay constituents was therefore not merely bigotry. It was also in contravention of Catholic teaching. Yet Cardinal O'Connor chose to side publicly with the only people who, by their actions that day, were breaching Catholic orthodoxy.

This is not to deny that anti-Catholicism no longer exists. Some criticism of the Catholic Church operates at a level of vilification that has long since dropped any pretense at furthering legitimate public debate. The moral arrogance of some activists is as crass as their adolescent attempts at blasphemy. The desecration of a consecrated communion wafer, which one gay activist performed in an assault on a mass in St. Patrick's in December 1989, has no place in civil discourse. It's also true that the Church is subject to a level of public criticism accorded to few other religious institutions, and is presented in an often skewed and unfavorable light. Its "liberal" positions—opposition to the Gulf war, criticism of Western capitalism, hostility to the death penalty—receive far less attention in the press than its "conservative" stances on abortion or women priests. The reason for this is quite simple. The media are largely run by secular people, whose view of Catholicism—indeed, of most religion—is often distorted by the narrow prism of religious ignorance. The agenda, when it is not liberal, is thoroughly secular. As a public culture, we are impoverished by this often unwitting tilt.

The conclusion, however, that this shallow view of Catholicism is equivalent to racial abuse, or to homophobia, is a false one. Catholics are rarely attacked anymore for characteristics they can do nothing about. Gay men and lesbians still are. No one shouts "papist" on the street in the way that "faggot" or "nigger" is still shouted. Nor is there widespread employment discrimination against Catholics. The evidence, in fact, suggests the opposite: American Catholics now have a higher per capita income than Protestants. Old canards about Catholics being stupid, unsophisticated, or reactionary, when they do exist, have less to do with bigotry than with snobbery: they are applied to white ethnics in general.

But none of this, of course, is what Messrs. O'Connor and Buchanan are really complaining about. Their gripe is with attacks on Catholic doctrines—such as the teachings on contraception, abortion, women priests, homosexual acts—that affront the secular liberal agenda. And they are seeking a kind of exemption from the public abuse that such positions, in a lively political culture, will inevitably provoke.

The twin double standards here are acute. Cardinal O'Connor and his supporters rightly point out that sensitivity-crazed liberals pounce on the slightest trace of homophobia or racism, while turning a blind eye to occasional anti-Catholic excesses. But conservatives are inconsistent too. They invoke freedom of speech for "insensitive" racial and sexual utterances but go touchy-feely when it comes to the Church. The truth is that Catholics have little to worry about. When their doctrines are assaulted with the ferocity of today's secular radicals, they should be more delighted than dismayed. It suggests that the challenging ideas of Catholic Christianity are being intermittently understood and taken seriously. Within this debate there will be the odd, lamentable descent into blasphemy, but the chance of this incivility is unavoidable in a truly free society. Catholics have witnessed worse blasphemies before, and the Church has managed to survive them.

This does not, of course, make for a tidy alliance between Church and state. It may even provoke livelier bouts of theological and political animosity between them. But Catholics who seek such a tidy alliance are in some sense misconstruing their own tradition. There is a fundamental conflict between the teachings of Catholicism and the achievement of secular American liberalism—and to deny such a conflict is to do justice to neither. To live with such a conflict is not an easy experience, to be sure, but Catholicism is not premised on a life of ease, and liberalism is not premised on liberty without cost. Indeed, tolerating these contradictions—even embracing them—may be the deepest sign of modern spiritual and political courage. The most alarming feature of the Catholicism of Messrs. O'Connor and Buchanan is that they wish to replace that courage with the false bravery of the bully.

NOTEBOOK

QUESTION TIME: Which of the two problems discussed above do you regard as a bigger threat to your values: misguided Catholic homophobia, on the one hand, or snobbish, secular, liberal anti-Catholicism, on the other? You can make your view known on our Sound Off Line, 1-900-726-6671.

SURVEY SAYS: Two weeks ago we asked our readers to imagine themselves as Muscovites and answer how they would vote in the all-union referendum. The results here were just as indecisive as they were back in the USSR: 50 percent for, 50 percent against.

GREEN WITH EMBARRASSMENT: Abject apologies to Mark Green, New York City's commissioner of consumer affairs. In this space two weeks ago, we made fun of him for being the teacher of an adult education course called "How to Meet and Keep Your Politically Correct Mate." Oops. Turns out the course was taught by another Mark Green, a psychologist in private practice. Mark Green No. 1 (who, to make matters worse, is also a longtime contributor to this magazine) twits us as follows: "My last 'politically correct' date was in 1976 with a beautiful Democrat named Deni Frand, whom I promptly married. Since then, the only 'dating' I've cared about has been of perishable consumer products on supermarket shelves. But I can't figure out

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whether to be more concerned with friends who believed I would engage in such a frivolous pursuit or with friends who thought I wouldn't. In any event, thanks: I haven't had so much fun since the day Dinkins beat Koch (which was *very* politically correct)."

LOST AND FOUND: Readers may remember the symposium "What Should Michael Do?" which we published in the summer of 1986. We were responding to a letter to the editor from Michael C. Sloan, an English literature major from an unnamed private university, requesting career advice. Not long ago we received a follow-up letter from a subscriber curious about whose advice our protégé decided to take. In response to an all-points bulletin published here a few weeks ago, Michael Sloan surfaced. Here's an excerpt of what he had to say: "I hope you didn't expend too much energy trying to track me down, because I'm right under your nose, living and working in Washington. And no, I am not a lawyer. I finished graduate school in public policy, worked in New York for a while, and then moved to Washington. Irving Kristol's April 1988 TNR cover story, "Why I Left," recommended the move, but aside from that, I haven't followed TNR's advice. None of the editors, curiously, had recommended government—my current work. If the magazine had been *Forbes*, the omission might be easier to understand, but for a liberal weekly like TNR, it seems a conspicuous oversight. (My mother took it as yet another sign of TNR's lost liberal credentials.) I can understand not recommending a career in the federal bureaucracy, though I wouldn't necessarily agree, but what about the Hill? What about state government? What about running for elected office? My job as the Social Security examiner at the Office of Management and Budget is great fun. For one thing, it affords the opportunity to make errors of enormous magnitude and import. One afternoon I misplaced a decimal point in our internal accounting system, and Director Darman went home early thinking the deficit was solved. I spend my days pondering how the government should deliver services to our poor, blind, disabled, and retired citizens, which sure beats studying yield rates. I don't know that I'll make a career at OMB. (As Henry Fairlie said in the symposium, "You don't need to start now a career you'll follow for the rest of your life.") In a few years I think I'll be ready for a radical change. I often think—cover your eyes—that either law or journalism would be an attractive option. But who knows? President Bush says we've licked the Vietnam syndrome. If somehow we can beat the post-War-on-Poverty syndrome, and government regains some of the lost idealism of the Roosevelt and Kennedy eras, maybe I'll stick around."

USUAL SUSPECT: Readers of *The New York Times* Arts & Leisure section who read Victor Navasky's article about the film *Guilty By Suspicion* last Sunday may be interested to know that it supplanted another, already accepted piece by Ronald Radosh. Mr. Radosh, one of America's most distinguished historians of the McCarthy era, thinks his article was replaced with Mr. Navasky's because his piece (Mr. Radosh's) was tougher on the Hollywood Communists, whose squalid politics Mr. Navasky's article doesn't deal with. Connie Rosenblum, the section editor, admits that the last-minute switch looks political but says the Navasky piece ran because it had fresh information about a dispute between the writer and the director of the film. Ms. Rosenblum says she wanted to run both articles but there just wasn't enough space. Sometimes, it seems, all the views fit to print don't fit.

BOOK CORNER: We're pleased to announce the publication of *Virus Hunting: AIDS, Cancer and the Human Retrovirus: A Story of Scientific Discovery* by Robert Gallo (A New Republic Book/Basic Books). As head of the Laboratory of Tumor Cell Biology at the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Gallo has been at the center of among the most important microbiological advances in medicine over the last decade. In *Virus Hunting* he brings the arcane realm of the research laboratory to life, telling of his and his associates' discovery of the first cancer-causing retrovirus in humans, which led them into AIDS research and the co-discovery of the virus responsible for the epidemic, soon followed by the development of the AIDS blood test. He also responds here, for the first time, to allegations that he was not the first to discover the AIDS virus. "His description of the key experiments . . . that led to the final isolation of the AIDS virus," the *New York Times* reviewer declared, "is intelligent and persuasive, particularly to a reader who has heard the other side of the story."

NO BACKSIES: Virginia Senator John Warner is outraged that some Germans have requested a reduction of their country's tab for the Gulf war. This despite the fact that foreign commitments reached $60 billion for a project that ended up costing only $42 billion, according to the best estimates. Mr. Warner says the chintzy Germans are insulting the memory of the Americans who were killed, those who were injured, and all their families. "I'd like to see them look into the faces, as I have, of several of the families who lost their loved ones—over 300 deaths are associated with this war and many hundreds of injuries—look into their faces and say we had a profit," Warner said on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" program on March 19. This is preposterous. If all the allies pay up, America will earn a financial profit, unless you assess our war dead as having a cash value, and an astronomical one at that. The allies never committed themselves to cover the human cost of the war, only the actual, monetary expenditures. That is as it should be. As a multimillion-

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aire, Mr. Warner should understand that when a venture generates an unexpected windfall, it's only fair to share the dividend with all the shareholders.

SELF-CONGRATULATIONS: THE NEW REPUBLIC has been chosen, twice, as a finalist for this year's National Magazine Awards, the magazine world's modest equivalent of getting nominated for an Oscar. This year we're a finalist in the General Excellence category, for magazines with a circulation under 100,000, and in the single-topic issue category, for our "Furor in the Gulf" special of September 3, 1990. The winners will be announced on April 24 at a ceremony that won't be televised—not even on C-SPAN—but we'll let you know. If we win, that is. ●

Death of a 'bad boy.'

BLUES FOR LEE

By Sidney Blumenthal

During the 1984 Republican convention in Dallas, the ambitious young centurions of the Reagan campaign set up shop in a suite atop the mammoth Anatole Hotel. It was the first time I met Lee Atwater. Reagan's victory seemed completely assured, and the talk of these political operatives was understandably easy and confident. Atwater, however, had a nervous energy that set him off. It was apparent in his uncontrollably jiggling legs, as if he were racing to a destination he didn't know, and in his constantly darting eyes, as if everything he saw had to be double- and triple-checked. Out of nowhere, Atwater asked me how much my watch cost. "Nice shoes," he added. The watch was pretty cheap and the shoes were penny loafers, but Atwater wasn't being sarcastic. His interest in small material objects was avidly naive. He wanted to know the status value of everything. What he was unsure about was not the things, but his relationship to them. He was searching for his place. He had become, by his early 30s, the deputy director of the White House Office of Political Affairs, but he wanted it all: to be the king of rock 'n' roll and lord of Republicanism.

If there was an ideology in which he believed, winning was it. He communicated the feeling that he didn't care in the slightest if anyone was shocked at what he did. He liked to present himself as a worldly-wise nihilist who had seen through everybody and everything, but he was not after power for its own sake. Power assuaged his insecurity.

The image Atwater preferred was that of the rebel, the representative man of his generation, a populist against the establishment. But his rise was instrumental in the rise of a new Republican establishment in his native South Carolina. He was middle class, but not upper middle class. His mother was a schoolteacher, his father an insurance claims adjuster. He attended a small private college, Newbury College, where he got poor grades despite his quick intelligence and made money showing blue movies. The frat rat went on to graduate school at the University of South Carolina, and worked on a thesis, never completed, while he was on the White House staff. His professor, Earl Black, told me that Lee read the first volume of Robert Caro's demonological biography of Lyndon Johnson as though it were *The Prince.*

On the side, Lee played rhythm and blues guitar, and did it well enough to hold his own with the best. His fascination—and identification—with black blues musicians, the ultimate outsiders, was above calculation. Their songs were about failure, tragedy, and loss, describing the inner sorrows of the lowest of the low. Lee knew those songs well, and sang them with genuine feeling; but his greatest political success was built on exploiting the story of a black convict. Politically, he rewrote the songs of the Dixiecrats in a new key for the post-Bourbon Republicans.

It must be said that every campaign in which Lee Atwater played a role was marked by low tactics and lies. Even polling for anti-Semitism in a congressional race was not beneath him. But his special genius lay in manipulating the status anxieties of the white middle and working classes, territory he knew instinctively. He helped to turn contemporary Southern politics away from the possibility of a genuine populism uniting blacks and whites around common economic issues. The outrageous antics of the bluesman who made "Bad Boy" his signature song were quietly appreciated in the boardrooms of the new glass skyscrapers.

Through George Bush, Atwater made his greatest leap upward. But Atwater was always keenly aware of the class distance between them. He regaled his friends with anecdotes about how skewed Bush's upper-class perspective was, like the time Bush referred without irony to the wealthy, Yale-educated Nicholas Brady as "a street-smart Irishman." Atwater looked upon Bush and his political talent with a cool eye. He privately described Bush as a "transitional figure," yet tried to convince reporters that Bush was being "underestimated."

Atwater had little affection for conservatives, though he presented himself as one of them—as nothing less than their spokesman in the inner councils. His conservatism helped make possible the strategy he designed to splinter the conservative movement, allowing Bush to emerge in the GOP primaries. Part of this approach involved attracting those drawn to Bush by the desire to associate with "class." The other part involved playing one conservative faction off against another. The strategy helped Bush win the nomination, but Atwater was sure his candidate was doomed in the general election. As late as July 1988 he morosely wondered how Bush's

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defeat would affect his own reputation. Then the Willie Horton issue kicked in.

There was only one political figure whom Atwater regarded with awe and even affection: Richard Nixon. He read every Nixon biography in search of lessons. When I ran into Atwater in a Georgetown bookstore shortly before his illness struck, he enthusiastically pushed the second volume of Stephen Ambrose's biography into my hand—another volume of *The Prince.* Atwater spoke of Nixon as the real founder of the modern GOP. But it was Bush who gave Atwater what he ultimately sought. After a fund-raiser for Bush at the Plaza Hotel, hosted by Donald Trump, the candidate and his manager left in the same sleek limousine. I stood slightly off Fifth Avenue with one of Atwater's closest associates. "Check out Lee," he nodded. "He's where he wants to be. The limo."

When Lee was dying he made amends, publicly and privately, for all of his affronts against political civility. It was as if his encounter with mortality had burned away his cynicism. He wished to leave something behind him besides the record of his campaigns. His legacy includes his regrets. ●

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE OLD BUSH

By Fred Barnes

Too bad Margaret Thatcher wasn't at the White House meeting on March 26. When President Bush conferred with her in Aspen, Colorado, last August 2 (she was still British prime minister then) she helped transform him into the uncompromising leader of a crusade against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. It was a new Bush, audacious, clever, willful. At the March 26 session in the Oval Office, normalcy returned. Bush gathered his advisers to decide whether to aid Kurdish and Shiite rebels against Saddam. Vice President Dan Quayle had read an article in that morning's *Wall Street Journal* in which Laurie Mylroie, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, urged American support for the Iraqi resistance. This reinforced Quayle's reservations about the policy of letting Saddam crush the rebels. But aside from Quayle, there wasn't much sentiment for "re-engagement." That's White House jargon for intervening in the Iraqi civil war. Even the limited step of shooting down Iraqi helicopter gunships was rejected (after debate). Neutrality won the day.

The old Bush is back. It's partly a result of the new situation in the Persian Gulf. In August Saddam had invaded Kuwait and was menacing Saudi Arabia and the oilfields crucial to the world economy. Not only was thwarting Saddam a just cause; America's national interest was involved. Now Saddam isn't a threat to neighboring countries or to the oil supply. He's merely killing thousands of Iraqis. But the new climate doesn't account fully for Bush's inaction. There's a deeper reason: he is not sure what he wants. In August his aim was to drive Saddam out of Kuwait and cripple Iraq's military machine. Now he wants Saddam ousted as president. By whom? His dictatorship replaced by what form of government? Bush is uncertain. "What we're looking for is stability," he said on March 23—a pretty fuzzy goal. Anyway, here's how he's reverted to form.

Moralist to realpolitician. Nothing arouses Bush's moral sensibility like the unprovoked crossing of a national border. When that happened, it was reminiscent for Bush of World War II. He likened Saddam to Hitler and concluded that combating him was morally necessary. Once Saddam was driven out of Kuwait, Bush's moral fervor dissipated. The civil war in Iraq reminds him of Vietnam. And he's promised over and over not to get America involved in another one of those. Besides, aiding the rebels might lead to the Balkanization of Iraq, making it less effective as a buffer against Iran.

Bush's moral energy is so depleted that Syria and Iran have condemned Saddam's annihilation of the rebels more forcefully than he has. When he addressed State Department employees on March 27, Bush cited "three areas" that are critical to bringing a "lasting peace" to the Middle East. A democratic Iraq, or even a reasonably humane one, wasn't on the list. (The three are Lebanon, "the Palestine-Israel situation," and "security and stability in the Gulf itself.") Bush, in fact, never mentions democracy in connection with Iraq, or Kuwait. In a letter to the emir of Kuwait, he urged "increased political participation," but not democracy.

Bold leader to cautious follower. From August 2 to February 28, the day the war ended, Bush stretched the meaning of United Nations resolutions to justify the strongest possible action against Saddam. Now he trots out the resolutions as a legalistic excuse for doing nothing. Stopping Saddam from using helicopters against rebel forces "was not a requirement of the United Nations," Bush insisted on March 27. "It's not in the resolutions." Pre-February 28, Bush dragged the allies along to whatever position he took. Now the White House worries about what the allies might favor.

One ally in particular has the ear of the Bush White House: Saudi Arabia. During the Gulf crisis American and Saudi interests coincided. Now the Saudis are dead set against a Shiite government in Baghdad, though that wouldn't necessarily be bad for the United States. The Saudis are fearful that Shiite nationalism might spread to Shiites in Saudi Arabia. Thus the Saudis are eager for Saddam's regime to continue, preferably under someone else. They want an intact Iraq as a barrier between them and Iran. They don't want to shoot down Saddam's helicopters. They don't want to hear

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any talk of democracy (folks in Saudi Arabia might get ideas). White House aides say that Bush had his own reasons for going along with all this. "We made our own choices here," says a senior official. But you won't hear a peep of complaint from the Saudis.

Molder of public opinion to pawn of public opinion. Four times in the Gulf crisis, Bush ignored polls and made daring decisions. Following the August 2 invasion he organized a coalition and deployed American troops to the Gulf. On November 8 he doubled the size of the deployment. On January 16 he started the air war. And on February 23 he began a land war. Each time, Bush rallied public opinion behind his decision. Now he's unwilling to risk that again. Everyone at the White House, especially Bush, remembers that his biggest applause line during the crisis was the vow to bring the troops home as soon as possible. "You can't underestimate the power of that," says a White House aide. Bush is terrified of re-engaging American troops in combat since it might mobilize public opinion against him. "I want to get our forces back home as soon as I can and I want to get them out of Iraq as soon as I can," Bush reassured reporters on March 27.

Warrior to politician. Exhibit A is the flap over General Norman Schwarzkopf's statement that he'd recommended the war be extended a day or two. It pitted Bush the born-again pol against Schwarzkopf the warrior. By the time the offending comment was aired on TV on March 27, the White House and the Pentagon had grown tired of Schwarzkopf. He'd "gotten gentle reminders . . . not to get out ahead of the policy," a Pentagon official said. Schwarzkopf didn't heed them. Moreover, he questioned whether Bush had stopped the war too soon, leaving Saddam with weaponry to slaughter rebels, including civilians. Bush doesn't want victory in Iraq tainted in the eyes of the American public. So Schwarzkopf was forced to recant.

Clear policy-maker to fuzzy thinker. Democrats complained that Bush never articulated his reasons for standing against Saddam in a single speech. They were right. But Bush got his points across over the months—in words and actions. The public knew Bush aimed to free Kuwait and curb Saddam, both to punish aggression and prevent its repeat. Now he's gone fuzzy again. Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater conceded Bush's policy on Iraqi helicopters is "murky, murky, murky." So are his thoughts on insurrections against Saddam. On February 15 Bush pleaded for "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside." A bid to encourage Kurdish and Shiite rebels? On the contrary, says a White House official: "We haven't contacted them."

If you aren't persuaded of the return of the old Bush, I've got one last item. On March 29 he was asked a question about Iraq as he and his wife visited the Tidal Basin (to see the cherry blossoms) just after dawn. "Seven," Bush answered inexplicably. Queried later as to what he meant, Bush said, "That's one more than six." Elaborating, he said, "That means I don't want to answer." I rest my case. ●

Alcoholics Anonymous and me.

BLITZED

By Joshua Zimmerman

My name is Josh and I'm *not* an alcoholic.

In the past a college student with my drinking habits—a frequent beer or two, a couple of times a year to excess—wouldn't feel compelled to declare this. But when I got ill from drinking last spring at Princeton and was taken to the infirmary, I was told to meet with the school's full-time alcohol counselor. Opening a folder in my name, he began the interview: Do you play drinking games? Have you gotten sick on alcohol before? Do you consume more than fourteen drinks a week? After fifteen minutes of this, he told me that getting sick was "a significant episode" in my "drinking history," that I was teetering on the brink of alcoholism.

Subjection to this type of inquisition is an increasing part of the curriculum on America's campuses: 60 percent of colleges have some sort of substance abuse program. And the idea behind it—that a given level of consumption or a major bender means you're a confirmed lush, or close enough to being one to need treatment—now pervades the $2 billion alcohol treatment industry.

Today's treatment theories reflect a far broader neotemperance trend, which first became evident around 1984, when Mothers Against Drunk Driving succeeded in raising the drinking age to 21. In 1988 then Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called (unsuccessfully) for a ban on happy hours. Last January an award-winning edition of *Little Red Riding Hood* was banned for first-graders in the Empire, California, school district because Grandma takes a glass of wine after escaping the wolf. Today's puritans lobby for a whole range of prohibitions, from banning alcohol industry sponsorship of sports events and rock concerts to barring convenience stores, gas stations, and supermarkets from selling booze.

The new public awareness about drinking has, of course, helped to reduce the horrendous problems caused by alcohol abuse. Consumption is down, particularly among the young. In 1980, 58 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 said they drank beer, according to Simmons Market Research. By 1989, only 47 percent did. The number of deaths attributed to drunk driving has fallen too, from 20,356 in 1982 to 17,849 in 1989—a 12 percent decline in seven years.

You'd think such success might moderate the impulse for ever more draconian correctives. But if any-

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thing, the anti-alcohol severity is increasing. Last summer the Supreme Court found that "the measure of the intrusion on motorists stopped briefly at sobriety checkpoints" is a small price to pay in the effort to reduce the "death and mutilation" caused by drunk drivers. Thirty-nine states now have "dram shop" liability and twenty-four states have "social host" liability, in which bartenders and hosts can be held partially responsible when someone they served gets in an accident.

In the treatment industry, the tactics used to intimidate heavy drinkers have become more coercive. An increasingly popular method of alcoholism treatment these days is "intervention." Invented by Dr. Vernon Johnson, a reformed alcoholic who became famous when he pressured Betty Ford into treatment, the method relies upon a team effort. Family, friends, and co-workers "intervene" by confronting the offender in public—sometimes at work, preferably when he is hung over—with a list of grievances and a series of ultimatums. Johnson's transcript of a typical intervention from his recent book, *Chemical Dependence,* includes threats from the victim's wife that she'll leave him if he doesn't seek treatment, and from his boss, who says he'll fire him. A car is supposed to wait outside so the victim can be whisked directly to a treatment center.

The Johnson Institute promotes intervention through traveling workshops and a large mail-order business of books, cassettes, and videos. One of Johnson's biggest clients is the national network of Employee Assistance Programs, in-house and regional workplace counselors who specialize in alcohol problems and are currently working with 12,000 corporate and government offices across the country. A supervisor, noticing lagging performance or simply suspecting an alcohol problem, can order an employee to meet with an EAP counselor. The counselor, who doesn't have to meet any national training standards, will tell these presumed alcoholics to go on the wagon. If the employee is caught drinking again—whether or not the drinking is affecting his job performance—his boss is encouraged to send him back for more counseling or fire him.

Coercive treatment is essentially an extension of one of the main precepts of Alcoholics Anonymous: alcoholism—a disease over which the alcoholic has no control—starts with the first drink and leads inexorably to death if the alcoholic does not become perfectly abstinent. It is thus essential to stop alcoholism in its early stages, no matter how scant the evidence. In recent years, however, the disease theory of alcoholism has come under attack. (See "Alcohol and Free Will" by Robert Wright, TNR, December 14, 1987.) Studies have shown that even many hard-core drinkers are able to control their drinking. Yet virtually every major alcohol treatment program in the country largely adheres to the AA tenets, and now a growing number are using some form of coercion.

Drunk drivers, understandably enough, have come under particularly ferocious scrutiny. District Court Judge Albert Kramer of Quincy, Massachusetts, sentences about 400 drunk drivers a year to enroll in Right Turn, a $725, twenty-six-week, out-patient treatment program, and to attend a series of AA meetings. "Everyone is assumed to be having a problem by virtue of their DWI conviction," explains Dr. Steve Valle, director of the program. "Social drinkers are really high-risk problem drinkers." As do most treatment programs, Right Turn uses a questionnaire to determine if you're an alcoholic. Right Turn's test is adapted from one by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Out of curiosity, I took it myself. Sure enough, I scored a 30 out of 47, which meant I was in "the final, deteriorative stage of alcoholism, when most alcoholics outwardly appear to be alcoholic." The test was designed in such a way that each symptom on a night of overindulgence was recorded separately, boosting my score.

Across the country convicted drunk drivers are ordered to begin treatment, usually at an AA chapter, or are given a choice between treatment and prison, which is, I suppose, a choice of sorts. But forcing someone to go to AA presents another problem: six of AA's "Twelve Steps" to counter alcoholism allude to God. Last year a Maryland drunk driver, John Norfolk, objected to his court-ordered AA meetings, saying the government was forcing him to participate in a religion. The state yielded—Norfolk was switched to a non-religious program—before a judgment was rendered, avoiding a precedent and letting Maryland continue with court-ordered AA. There are now, though, non-spiritual groups for people with drinking problems, which judges are beginning to use as AA alternatives in sentencing. In contrast with AA, one group, called Rational Recovery, believes everyone has the power to overcome alcohol problems—without undergoing lifelong treatment.

The craze for compulsory treatment would make some sense if there were proof that it worked. Yet a 1988 Bureau of Statistics special report found that nearly half of all inmates convicted of driving while intoxicated had previously been involved with an alcohol treatment program, and one in eleven was in treatment at the time of arrest. A major report issued last spring by the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine cites a study in which sanctions (e.g., suspending licenses) were shown to be more effective against recidivism than alcohol treatment.

Of course, all this might be an elaborate process of self-denial. After several more sessions with my college alcohol adviser, a couple of compulsory sessions with AA, and an "intervention" organized by TNR interns, maybe I would be forced to admit that, yes, I am an alcoholic. The trouble is, by the time that's all over, I probably will be.

JOSHUA ZIMMERMAN is a former TNR reporter-researcher.

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PYONGYANG POSTCARD

JUCHE STATE

By Pico Iyer

The major feature of the forty-five-story Koryo Hotel in Pyongyang, North Korea, is reflective glass. There are mirrors in every passageway, huge four-sided pillars of mirrors in the lobby, ninety-four mirrors in the hangar-like dining room. The only person I saw more of than myself in a recent visit to the "Earthly Paradise" was Kim Il Sung, the ubiquitously reproduced leader of this monogrammed dictatorship. "Today they took me to the Botanical Garden and showed me all the plants named after Kim Il Sung, even all the bloody plants *planted* by Kim Il Sung," a U.N. official remarked sadly, in the dining room, surrounded by ninety-four reflections of himself. "It's going to be a long three weeks."

The rest of the world may have experienced a fading of enthusiasm for neo-totalitarianism, but North Korea hasn't noticed. Pyongyang turned out to be just the same as in the photographs: no cars or bicycles in the streets; almost no shops or restaurants or movie theaters; no smiles on the people's faces, no frowns, no expressions of any kind; nothing, in fact, to distract from the spotless hush. The block-capital street signs and numbered towers, the 200-foot monuments and look-alike megaliths, the featureless statues and *Sound of Music* murals, seemed a kind of architect's blueprint for communism: generic featurelessness.

My first day in Pyongyang I was taken to the Grand People's Study House, the 150,000-seat stadium built for the 1988 Olympics, and to the local 180-foot-high Arch of Triumph. ("For its ideological content, size, architectural style, and the representation of sculpture," the *Korea Guidebook* had explained, "the Arch of Triumph attains the highest perfection of monumental art.") In my in-flight magazine on the airplane to Korea, I read that the Great Leader was "a great comrade, great man and fighter . . . a great thinker, politician and strategist . . . a great man and father of the people." Later, standing in the shadow of the seventy-foot bronze statue of the "peerless patriot and national hero," my guide extended a sweeping arm across the whole skyline. "At first," he explained, "we did not know how to make buildings and sculptures. We tried, but it was not beautiful. But we tried and tried again. Now look. How can you say our economy is weak when we have all this?"

Kim Il Sung had built up the whole nation out of the rubble of war. Now, my guide went on, 50,000 new flats were going to be completed in honor of the "sun of the nation's" 80th birthday in April 1992, which is also to be the occasion for his handing over power to his son, Dear Comrade Kim Jong Il (or "One Right Way" Kim, as my guide translated). "Enemy propagandists say that this is a family dynasty," he explained. "But we need a leader just like Kim Il Sung. Who better than his son?"

By 9:30 on a Sunday morning, enormous color-coordinated crowds were already practicing "mass card games" in Kim Il Sung Stadium. (The Koreans are world champions of "mass games"; they actually have "mass games" majors in college, and practice card patterns every day in school.) Already the enormous emptiness of Kim Il Sung Square was filled with children standing in the rain, "dancing hand-in-hand" to the catchy tune of "Pyongyang Shining under the Rays of the Lodestar." Everywhere I looked people were filing along in groups, two-by-two, with a leader at their head, like kindergarteners on a field trip. "People are the most valuable thing in the world," my guide informed me.

After lunch we went off on a pilgrimage to the humble thatched cottage at Mangyongdae (or "All Seeing Hill"), where the "all-triumphant, resolute, and incomparable leader" had spent his childhood, "nursing his great revolutionary will." In my first few hours in the country I had already seen his first wife's tomb, his uncle's grave, and his cousin's headstone. Now I was able to enjoy his grandmother's broken kimchi jar and his great-grandfather's tiny study (though there was some textual ambiguity here: was it his "great grandfather," as in "great man and father of the people," or only his grandfather's or grandmother's dad?). Hundreds of devotees lined up in the drizzle to have their pictures taken in the cradle of the revolution. Hymnlike organ music piped through the landscaped grounds. My guide pointed out the "many beautiful trees and marvelous pebbles contributed by the people." In the bushes scores of workers labored silently to keep the gardens perfect.

Nearby was the famous Mangyongdae Fun Fair, built to "cater for over 100,000 visitors a day." On this day I counted fifteen, or roughly three for every functioning ride.

"Did your president come here?" I asked my guide, a debonair Left Bank type, puffing on an American cigarette.

"Oh yes," he replied, his face flushed with seemingly genuine joy. "And he was surrounded by hundreds o. children."

It was silly of me to have asked, I suppose. Soon enough I was seeing the plaque commemorating his visit to the video arcade (reverberant now with the sound of toy guns). Within twenty-four hours I was being shown the huge, blown-up color photographs of his trip to the "Happiness-filled Pleasure Park." The "eminent Marxist-Leninist and outstanding military strategist" had chosen the Fun Fair site himself, I read in a book called *An Earthly Paradise for the People*; and in *The*

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Great Man Kim Jong Il I also read how the younger Kim had demanded that a Jet Coaster be made 1,500 meters long. The Jet Coaster, the Dear Comrade had remarked, "is very good for developing boldness in young people."

By now things were beginning to fall into a pattern. "What is that statue?" I asked as we drove past a series of *tableaux vivants* and 400-foot Korean monuments to Korea. "Oh, Juche," said my guide, almost casually.

The Juche idea—or self-reliance, as the Koreans, with alarmingly little irony, define it—was much on my mind as the days went on. Luckily I had many opportunities to explore it further. The main headline in the *Pyongyang Times* was "A letter to President Kim Il Sung"; page two featured a report on a meeting of the Asian Regional Institute of the Juche Idea (ARIJI); page three included another report on the ARIJI meeting. In the display case of my hotel's bookstore there were 114 different works, all of them by Kim *père* and *fils*, in Japanese and Arabic and everything in between. Behind them were fourteen more shelves double-stacked with more titles, usefully specifying their genres—*Immortal History: Revolutionary Aurora* ("A Cycle of Novels"), *The Mother of Korea* ("A Biographical Novel"). I saw two books that did not strike me as strictly relevant: *Story of a Hedgehog* and *Boys Wipe Out Bandits.* But all the rest, thank Kim, stuck assiduously to the main theme. The Great Leader's biography stretched across 1,808 pages.

So great was the triumph of nurture over nature here—or of mind over matter—that the North Koreans looked, to my eye, quite different from their cousins and brothers in the South. In some respects their ways seemed more refined—or simply more beaten-down—than the pell-mell boisterousness of Seoul. Yet in many ways the South Koreans—with their militaristic drills, their pragmatism, their collective-mindedness, their tireless construction of concrete towers and fanatical determination to make good—were not so different from their sworn enemies in the North. In that sense, North Korea, for all its anonymity, seemed a distinctly East Asian place. All across the region—in Japan and South Korea as much as in China and North Korea—one finds the same extraordinary gift for regimentation and self-surrender, as if the religious impulse here had simply been rechanneled toward country or company or cause. It hardly seemed to matter whether the object of this devotion was nominally capitalist or communist.

It was also no surprise that these most standoffish of countries vie for the title "Hermit Kingdom." Certainly a professedly "homogeneous nation" that boldly asserts it has "never had mixed blood with other races," and a country in which 50 percent of the people, by one estimate, have the same surname (Kim), has a

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head start when it comes to single-mindedness and solidarity. My guide, in fact, took pains to stress patriotism far more than Marxism; his country, he implied, was the end point of all his devotion. "The people who do not have a patriotic idea," he said, in a rare burst of fury, "they are no better than animals!"

PICO IYER is an essayist for *Time*.

The day of the demo.

MARCH 28, 1991

By Conor O'Clery

MOSCOW

As the American Embassy burns in a freak fire, the first of the military convoys appears, a long line of olive-green trucks, headlights blazing, grinding past the line of distraught would-be emigrants fearful that their American visas are literally going up in smoke. By now police and troops are rumbling into the city from every direction, gearing up for the pro-Yeltsin rally in Manezh Square, beside the Kremlin. Interior Minister Boris Pugo announces on the car radio that 50,000 troops and militia have been mobilized to reinforce a ban on demonstrations. Driving around with a Russian colleague, we come across 140 covered trucks parking nose to tail on the river embankment by the Hotel Rossiya, eighty more in Gertsen Street, including some with camouflage netting, seventy between the Rossiya Hotel and the Kremlin, thirty-six more in Pushkin Square beside the *Izvestia* office, thirty by the Bolshoi Theater, dozens more in side streets. Ten yellow buses with drawn curtains parked by the history museum contain the "black berets."

At the Russian Congress there is outrage. Even Communist members who had called the session to vote no confidence in chairman Boris Yeltsin are incensed. "This is a question of human dignity," says Dmitry Martynov of the anti-Yeltsin Communist bloc. "There was no need to bar the rally." Bella Kurkova, a radical deputy and TV host from Leningrad, complains that "the streets of Moscow are bristling with military hardware. It is brute psychological pressure." The Democratic Russia group wins a vote by 532 to 286 to suspend the Soviet government's ban on demonstrations. Yeltsin's deputy, Ruslan Khasbulatov, walks across the Kremlin cobbles to inform Mikhail Gorbachev of this. The president tells him the Soviet parliament cannot be overruled by a republican legislature, and that troops and police will not be withdrawn that day. On hearing the news some deputies propose moving to Leningrad rather than assemble "at gunpoint." At 2 o'clock the session is adjourned on the suggestion of Yeltsin, and deputies are urged to attend the demonstration.

The rally is due to begin at 6 o'clock, with two columns marching to Manezh Square, one from the new arbat along Kalininsky Prospect, the other from Mayakovsky Square on the ring road near the now smoldering U.S. Embassy, passing Pushkin Square and proceeding down Tverskaya Street. By mid-afternoon small groups are gathering near the Manezh, one around a truck driver, Roman Zhukov, with a sign on cardboard saying: "I demand Gorbachev's resignation; he has led the country to starvation," and another beside a bookseller offering the works of Boris Yeltsin and Lee Iacocca. By 4:30 there are 1,000 people with Russian flags beside the nearby Gosplan building. They move toward the Manezh, but the doors of the yellow buses open and the black berets run at them with plastic shields and batons, pushing them roughly off the square. Hundreds of police then form lines across Kalininsky Prospect and Tverskaya Street, forcing everyone to leave. "What do you think you are doing? You should side with your people," a woman shouts. Mounted police appear, schooled in the crowd control methods of czarist times. Pedestrians whistle and boo.

We are having coffee in the Baku Restaurant between Pushkin and Mayakovsky Square at 5 o'clock when the waiters rush to the windows. Traffic has stopped, and the four-lane street is filling with people from every direction. A cordon of militiamen with steel helmets perched awkwardly on their fur hats are, however, blocking the exit from Pushkin Square to the Kremlin. Dozens of youths with Russian flags climb onto a parked truck, forming a revolutionary tableau. An old, bearded man shouts abuse of Gorbachev in doggerel verse. Some militiamen smile. The faces of police and people are only inches apart.

The scene beneath the city's big neon Coca-Cola sign is generally ignored by the thousand-strong queued at McDonald's across Pushkin square. Stewards with bullhorns urge everyone to go to Mayakovsky Square for a meeting prior to the march to the Manezh. But the whole of the half-mile street between the two squares is now packed with people milling about. One has a poster showing a boot kicking Gorbachev, with the words "From Russia with love." Another says, "Down with the Communist junta." A man waves the flag of the European Community, with its twelve stars, a symbol of the destination he wishes for Russia. A heavy, fluffy snow falls and coats everything in white, even the mustaches of the militiamen.

Several people crowd around the soldiers sitting in trucks by the *Izvestia* building. "Why are you here?" asks an irate woman. A captain from Sverdlovsk replies: "There could be criminals on the streets." A man in a flat cap says, "You're not a decent person, coming here to stop Muscovites from meeting peacefully," and adds: "Look at his eyes, he's on drugs." The banter sometimes comes close to fraternization. "We're all Russian lads," says one soldier with wispy facial hairs. "I support Yeltsin too." But the soldiers are wary, watchful for the

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KGB plainclothesmen, prowling around in their ski caps.

"This is no place for foreigners," a young man says to me, grinning. "If they shoot you, your country will have to declare war on us." It has become a very Russian occasion, good humored, passive, disorganized, on the verge of chaos, but with a compromise worked out. The banned rally is taking place, but its leaders will not force a confrontation. By 6:30 a wide column, joined by the demonstrators from Kalininsky Street, is inching toward Pushkin Square, but it is obvious it is going nowhere. It stops outside the Stanislavsky Theater for a fresh series of anti-Communist speeches ending with an appeal for everyone to go home. The crowds drift off into the night, leaving only a few hundred facing the militiamen blocking the road to the Kremlin from Pushkin Square. At 8:05 a yellow bus carrying Russian deputies arrives, and a voice on its loudspeaker says: "Comrade militiamen, please let us through, we are coming forward very slowly to pass through your ranks on the way to the Manezh." The rows of police stiffen. Captain Illuzhinsky of the militia broadcasts a reply. "That would be a mistake, do not do it." The bus backs away.

At 10:30 I drive round the city again. The Manezh is deserted. Red Square is open to pedestrians, though there are none. All the demonstrators have left. There isn't a single military truck to be seen.

The occupation had lasted twelve hours. I had not seen a single stone thrown or blow struck, despite the dire predictions of the apologists for the Kremlin who cry wolf before such occasions. Maybe that's because the democrats think it's only a matter of time before they win. But their patience cannot last forever. Next time Moscow may not be so lucky.

CONOR O'CLERY is Moscow correspondent for the *Irish Times.*

Taking drivers for a ride.

STOP IT HERTZ

By Jonathan Rauch

The next time you go to the airport, you'll notice that there are four or five rent-a-car concessions right there in the lobby. Want a car? Just walk up to the counter, sign the papers, and drive away. Of course, the convenience will cost you. Typically the rent-a-car company pays the airport 10 percent of its gross receipts. That cost—a dime of every dollar you pay—is passed along to you. Fair is fair. That's the American way.

The American way, that is, of the late nineteenth century, when the great cartels and company towns still flourished. For a case study in modern American feudalism, look a little further.

Suppose you're on a budget. You're willing to sacrifice convenience, so you rent a car from a company with offices outside the airport. "Off-airport," they're called in the business, and in the 1980s they sprang up by the dozen. They pick you up at the curb and shuttle you to the rental lot some distance away. A hassle, but you save money. Meanwhile, the guys in the airport lobby lose a customer—and the airport loses its 10 percent commission.

So what have many airports—which are public monopolies, and thus exempt from antitrust actions—begun doing in the last few years? They have imposed a fee on off-airport companies for the privilege (as they call it) of driving vans in front of the airport to pick up customers. This required commission typically runs to something like 8 percent of gross receipts.

Yes, you've got it. Ten percent (and often a rent payment, but consumer advocates say the charge is usually well below market rates) buys a company a concession right there in the airport. Eight percent buys the privilege of meeting your customers with a van.

Airport managers defend the policies on the grounds that companies that depend on the airport for business should "pay their fair share" to support it. Airports, after all, are expensive to run. Walter Burg, the general manager of Tucson's airport, says, "People who make their living off the airport ought to pay for it."

By this logic, presumably, luggage companies, which also make their living off the airport, should be required to pay a percentage of their gross in exchange for the privilege of access to airport baggage stands. Airports don't go that far. But some of them do take their commission even for off-airport rental-car customers who *never use the van.* These airports charge the access fee against any customer who rents his car within, say, forty-eight hours of arriving at the airport. Don't like it? Off-airport companies who don't agree to this arrangement can kindly keep their shuttle buses off airport property.

If you think an 8 percent fee makes no difference, ask Jim Cantwell. He owned a Thrifty rental franchise in Tucson—indeed, had invested most of his savings in it. Since he was off-airport, he ran a five-passenger limo to meet each flight. Two years ago the airport switched from charging him about $1,400 a year for that privilege to charging him 7.5 percent of his gross receipts—about $40,000 a year, he says. The reason was that rental companies with offices in the lobby were saying they'd have to take a hike if something wasn't done about their off-airport competitors. Whether Cantwell could make money in Arizona's slow economy was iffy to begin with; the fee, he says, made survival impossible. He left the rental-car business and narrowly averted personal bankruptcy.

Everyone agrees that off-airport rental companies

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should pay *some* portion of what it costs to run airports. The question is how much. In justifying their pricing policies, the airports offer at least a dozen rationales, most of them unimpressive. The main reason, however, is not hard to find in testimony from Senate hearings last year: "If airports are prohibited from or restricted in charging fees to off-airport car rental companies, on-airport car rental companies will have a tremendous incentive to move off airport and, in the process, take with them the substantial revenues they generate."

So at last we reach the center of this thicket. Long ago, when rental car companies were few and they all had counters in air terminals, airports set a more or less arbitrary 10 percent gross-receipts fee. All companies were equally affected, so none objected. Markets then did what they always do to cozy arrangements, which was to create alternatives. Off-airport companies sprang up. The airports now had only two choices. They could lower their own charge, from 10 percent to whatever the market would bear. Or they could force the competition's prices up. A private company in a competitive market would have had to do the former. Airports, being monopolies, could do the latter. And so they did.

Not surprisingly, the enraged competitors have come to Washington for a solution—one that is little better than the problem. They want to bring the airports' pricing policies under the jurisdiction of the courts or the regulators. (Right now these policies are off-limits to both.) The airports and rent-a-car giants that oppose the legislation, and that have prevailed so far, argue that it's unwise to get Congress and the courts mired in the business of setting rental-car concession fees. And they're right. What do judges and politicians know about how much rental-car concessions should cost? You'd have to pass a bill or go to court or petition a bureaucracy every time you wanted to change a price.

A better solution would be for airports to recognize market realities and put the whole supply of rental-car counters and pickup-van permits out for bid. If they still needed revenues, they could assess charges based on passengers' and companies' actual use of airport property.

But it would be best of all to avoid this kind of problem in the first place: in other words, to look for alternatives to public monopolies. What this whole snakebitten mess illustrates is that public monopolies—whether they're running airports, delivering the mail, teaching inner-city schoolchildren, or signing welfare checks—can be just as high-handed and backward as private ones. This is a fact that some Democrats are starting to catch on to. It's high time for more liberals to listen to Jim Cantwell's complaint and fall out of love with public monopolies.

JONATHAN RAUCH is a contributing editor of *National Journal.*

The Social Security debate of 1937.

DÉJÀ VIEWS

By Eduard A. Lopez

The setting is Washington, D.C. A political debate is under way on the subject of Social Security taxes. A senator has denounced the Social Security financing arrangements favored by the president of another party. The scheme involves the buildup of large reserves, invested in Treasury bonds, to pay benefits at a far future date. The senator, a member of the Finance Committee, charges trickery: the funds are being used to finance budget deficits, and the tax burden falls disproportionately on those least able to pay. There are liberals and conservatives on both sides of the debate.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan versus George Bush, right? Wrong. The senator was Arthur Vandenberg, a Republican from Michigan, and the president was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The year was 1937. The debate was the first of only two in the history of Social Security over the fundamental question of whether the program should be financed as a reserve plan or on a pay-as-you-go basis (that is, whether the system should build a reserve to pay future benefits, or simply schedule future tax rate increases to handle projected costs). The debate lasted three years and was finally resolved in favor of pay-as-you-go on recommendations from a bipartisan advisory council.

The second debate now comes fifty years later. Is there anything to be learned from the first in the context of the second?

The Social Security Act of 1935 was developed by President Roosevelt's Committee on Economic Security, which was headed by Labor Secretary Frances Perkins. The act established payroll taxes for employees and employers, set at a rate of 1 percent each starting in 1937 and scheduled to rise incrementally to 3 percent by 1949. Wages in excess of $3,000 per year were not taxable. The act also established earnings-related old-age benefits, which were scheduled to begin in 1942. The financing arrangements called for accumulating a reserve of $47 billion by 1980 to cover anticipated costs as the system matured.

Roosevelt's contribution to the plan was his specific instruction that it be financed from employee and employer payroll taxes. The main factor in Roosevelt's thinking was his belief that the program should be on an insurance model. Social Security was not to be a welfare program. People would establish entitlement to benefits through their work and contributions. This

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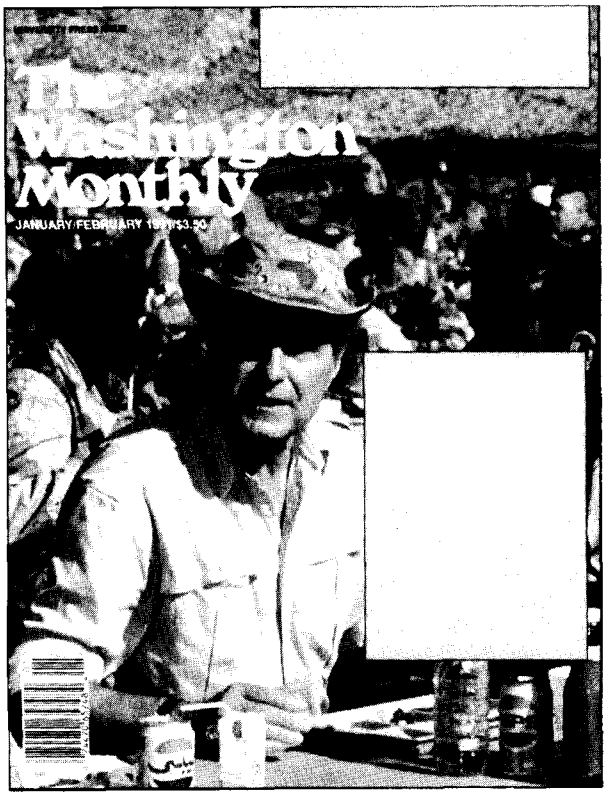

Throughout the Gulf crisis, while the rest of the media acted as cheerleaders for war, we were almost alone in saying it didn't make sense to use our military might to devastate a small country when all we wanted to do was to punish one man. Does that sound odd, even crazy? That's what people said when:

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way, Roosevelt hoped, the program would enjoy enough popular support to survive any subsequent attempts at political sabotage. Another key factor, however, was more practical. The payroll tax would start in 1937 and benefits would not begin until 1942. Payroll tax revenues would be invested in U.S. Treasury bonds. The Treasury could thus use the money for years to finance other New Deal programs.

The financing debate began soon after enactment in August 1935. Republican presidential candidate Alf Landon charged that billions of dollars would be raised and wasted by Washington big spenders. This wasn't an extreme position. Similar views were expressed by the AFL, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and *The New York Times*. Keynesian economists voiced concern about the effects on a weak economy of raising so much more in Social Security taxes than would be immediately spent on benefits.

The debate was stepped up in January 1937 when the payroll taxes went into effect. Senator Vandenberg questioned the fiscal prudence and political viability of building up a $47 billion Social Security reserve. The envisaged reserve would be more than enough money to buy all the farms in the United States. That such a fund "would remain intact and not suffer periodical depletions," the senator declared, "is more than human nature in a political democracy can rationally anticipate." He recommended that benefits begin sooner, that the tax rate increase scheduled for 1940 be postponed, and that the fund's accumulation be limited.

Eventually a commission was set up to investigate the financing method. The first Social Security Advisory Council was appointed in May 1937, the same month the Social Security Act was held to be constitutional. The council deliberated for a year and a half. Business delegates wanted to resolve the issue in favor of a pay-as-you-go plan. A council member from the CIO wanted to keep the reserves and use them to finance construction projects. In April 1938 Senator Henry Cabot Lodge proposed cutting payroll taxes by almost half. The economy was in a recession and the tax cut would be remedial, he argued. The Senate rejected the proposal, but Roosevelt was worried enough to ask the council to report before the next session of Congress in January 1939.

The council's report came out in December 1938. It recommended new benefits for wives and widows and children, and proposed that benefit payments begin two years earlier, in 1940. The benefit expansion and accelerated start-up meant something of a retreat from the existing reserve financing plan, since the increased spending would mean a smaller fund accumulation. On the question of financing, the council recommended a "reasonable contingency reserve." Congress enacted the council's recommendations, and also postponed the 1940 tax rate increase, in the Social Security Amendments of 1939. Social Security was managed on a pay-as-you-go basis for the next fifty years.

Well, almost. In 1977 the Social Security system was in financing trouble. Inflation was in double digits, and benefits were indexed to inflation according to a faulty formula enacted in 1972 that actually overindexed benefits in times of very high inflation. The formula was modified, but Congress took the opportunity to inject more near-term revenues into the system by accelerating the increases in the tax rate schedule. For example, a rate increase scheduled for 2011 (to garner more revenues when the baby boomers start to retire) was moved up to 1990. By 1983 the system faced another crisis caused by still high inflation and the 1981-82 recession, which curtailed revenues. Benefit outlays were trimmed and the tax rate increase schedule was further accelerated.

The 1977 and 1983 revisions represented a reversal in financing policy, but the shift was hardly debated. As a result of the change, the Social Security system is projected to build a reserve over the next thirty-five years of some $9 trillion in Treasury debt. The reserve now stands at roughly $240 billion, or close to a year's worth of benefits—a reasonable contingency reserve. But it is rising by more than $1 billion a week this year, a rate that will rise to $2 billion by 1996 and $3 billion a week by 2000. The last rate hike planned in current law went into effect on January 1, 1990. The rate is now 6.2 percent each for both employers and employees (excluding 1.45 percent for Medicare). Before 1977 this was the rate planned for 2011. If we were to go back to pay-as-you-go financing, we would not need this rate until 2015.

On the eve of the last rate increase, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for whom I work, announced a proposal to cut the Social Security tax rate to 5.1 percent. We should, he said, go back to pay-as-you-go financing, with a reasonable contingency reserve. (Robert J. Myers, who served as Social Security chief actuary for twenty-three years and was on the staff of Roosevelt's Committee on Economic Security, had been urging this for years.) Moynihan's main argument has been that large sums of Social Security revenue are being used to finance budget deficits, violating the integrity of the Social Security trust funds and making government finance more regressive. This year he added a new twist: the economy is in a recession and the tax cut will provide a needed stimulus.

Sound familiar? An element common to both debates is an underlying polemic that is political in nature but produces unusual political allies and opponents. In the first debate Republicans Alf Landon and Arthur Vandenberg tried to exploit the financing issue in order to undermine Roosevelt's success with the New Deal. By focusing their attack on the financing of Social Security, they found allies in those who supported the program but had concerns about its financing aspects, including liberals in the labor movement and the Keynesians. On the other side, Roosevelt was defending a financing system considered by many liberals to be too conservative for its reliance on regressive payroll taxes.

In the current debate the Moynihan proposal was

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quickly seen by many liberals as a good political issue for the Democrats. New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Democratic National Committee chairman Ron Brown believed it would be a good counterpoint to President Bush's proposed capital gains tax cut. (A year later Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell endorsed the plan.) They also recognized an opportunity to steal the tax-cut issue from the Republicans. Many conservatives embraced the proposal too because it was, after all, a tax cut, and perhaps because they feared losing the tax-cut issue to Democrats. But many conservatives and liberals, such as President Bush and House Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski, opposed the idea because they were worried about having to make up the revenue loss with other tax increases.

Another element common to both debates is the concern over the use of Social Security reserves to finance other government programs. The first time around, conservatives feared that the availability of the funds would lead to a socialistic expansion of government programs. They also said that the reserve would inevitably tempt Congress to liberalize Social Security benefits and create larger obligations for the future. Five decades later Moynihan has argued that the government's growing reliance on payroll-tax revenue is shifting the fiscal burden to low- and middle-income workers. He also seems to share the conservative concern of the 1930s that Congress cannot be trusted with large Social Security reserves.

A third common element is the economic argument that a Social Security tax cut would help an ailing economy. In 1936-37 the country was in a recession. Some, perhaps, took the opportunity to urge a payroll tax cut for political gain. But Keynesian economists also argued for a tax-cut stimulus, eager to give their new views practical application and effect. The government, however, was unwilling to give up the money. In 1991 we are again in a recession. Some supply-side and Keynesian economists argue that a Social Security tax cut would be a good economic stimulus. Others are worried about the budget deficit and the potential effect on interest rates of cutting Social Security taxes. The government is still unwilling to give up the money.

One thing at least can be learned from all of this. In 1937-38 a bipartisan advisory council thrashed out fundamental political, social, and economic issues in order to resolve the first debate. Labor representatives on the council wanted to spend the reserves on works projects to create jobs. Some economists and business representatives wanted to go to pay-as-you-go financing. The Roosevelt administration wanted to keep the reserve plan. In the end, the council proposed new benefits and a reasonable contingency reserve. The benefit expansion pleased liberal critics and the retreat from reserve financing satisfied others. Roosevelt got to keep his Social Security program financed with payroll taxes. A political compromise, to be sure. But one that worked well for more than fifty years. And one based on sound financing principles that we should now return to.

EDUARD A. LOPEZ, a lawyer, is legislative assistant to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

How far left can you go? Farther.

THE STRANGE CASE OF RAMSEY CLARK

By John B. Judis

In 1966 Ramsey Clark, not yet 40, became Lyndon Johnson's attorney general. He served during a time of unparalleled domestic turbulence but distinguished himself by his calm and reasonableness. In 1974, when he was running for U.S. senator in New York, Clark was even mentioned by columnists as a future Democratic presidential nominee. Lanky, jug-eared, with an endearing drawl, the incorruptible Clark seemed to embody the kind of prairie populism that could revive the Democrats.

Yet today Clark, 64, inhabits the furthest reaches of the fevered swamps of American politics. He has become not simply a critic of American administrations, but the best hope of their foreign adversaries, from the Libyans to the Iraqis. As a lawyer working out of a Greenwich Village office, Clark has turned into a legal 911 for a tawdry collection of accused terrorists and neo- or ex-Nazis—and has gone far beyond representing them in court.

In the last two years Clark has plummeted to new lows, losing the only surviving remnants of credibility from his storied past. He has become the lead counsel and leading apologist for Lyndon LaRouche. And as the United States began deploying troops in the

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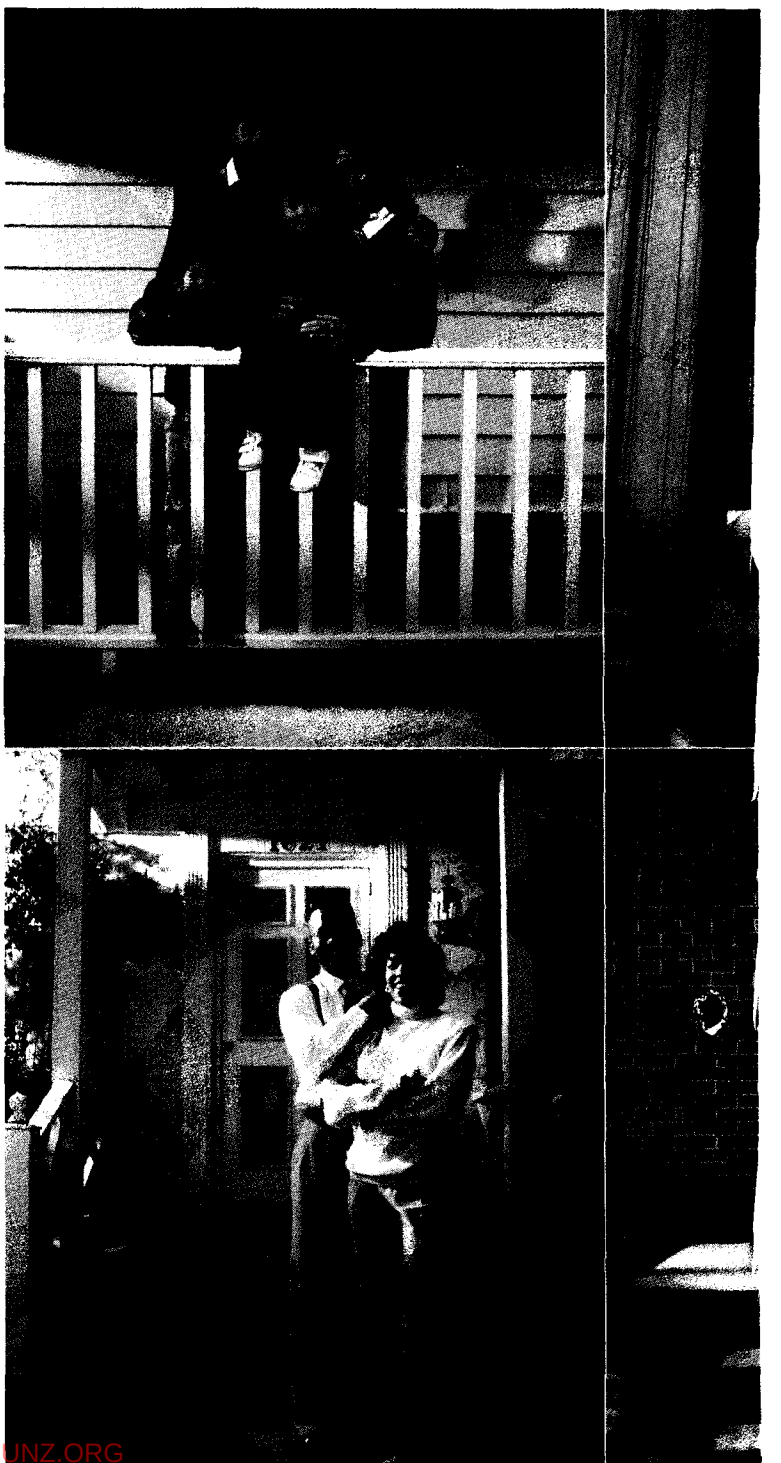

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Persian Gulf, Clark accepted the leadership of an "anti-war" coalition run by the Workers World Party, a pro-Saddam sect. Clark's coalition was against sanctions as well as war.

Clark took LaRouche's case after LaRouche and six of his associates were convicted in 1988 in a Virginia court for conspiracy, mail fraud, and tax evasion. In the appeals brief that Clark filed on LaRouche's behalf in October 1989, he argued that LaRouche was denied a fair trial because of the speed with which the jury was chosen. But he didn't stop there. The campaign to prosecute LaRouche, Clark charged, was an "outgrowth" of the FBI's COINTELPRO program and was instigated "by, among others, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger." In fact, COINTELPRO did not survive the Nixon presidency, and the FBI did not move against LaRouche until years after Kissinger had complained of harassment from the cult.

In his brief Clark claimed that LaRouche's National Caucus of Labor Committees had acquired "powerful enemies within the establishment" because of its commitment "to combat the traffic in so-called 'recreational drugs' ... and the practice of usury." In fact, the organization acquired enemies because of its use of violence and smears and blatant anti-Semitism. Of course, lawyers need only believe that the assertions in a brief are defensible in court, but LaRouche expert Chip Berlet calls Clark's brief a "political polemic" on LaRouche's behalf.

Clark has not confined himself to writing briefs for LaRouche. Last June he gave a speech in Copenhagen, at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The speech, sponsored by the Schiller Institute, a LaRouche front group run by LaRouche's wife, was reported in the Danish daily *Politiken* and was later reprinted in full in LaRouche's *New Federalist.* In his speech Clark framed a defense of LaRouche within an attack on America, which, he charged, had "once again become the absolute center of world power." The American government, he argued, was singling out blacks for execution, making "virtually every elected black official the subject of a criminal investigation or prosecution." It had moved against LaRouche because he was "a danger to the system, just as black officials are." Clark not only painted LaRouche as a civil rights martyr; he also dismissed as "vilification" the well-documented charges that LaRouche is anti-Semitic, violence prone, and a neo-Nazi.

Clark himself once knew better. In 1986 he had discussions with Dennis King, author of *Lyndon LaRouche and American Fascism,* and economist Michael Hudson, who was suing LaRouche for loan fraud, about establishing an anti-LaRouche organization. "Ramsey raised the idea that LaRouche was a menace and we had to do something about him," King said. Hudson agrees. "Ramsey had the best picture of LaRouche of anyone we met." King and Hudson gave Clark extensive materials on LaRouche, but he never followed up on their conversations. The next thing they knew, he was representing LaRouche in court.

Two months after appearing on LaRouche's behalf in Copenhagen, Clark became the leader of the National Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East. The coalition's aims and energy came from the Workers World Party, which, if not for Clark, would still be toiling in obscurity. Founded in 1960, the Workers World Party is a neo-Stalinist, Third World revolutionary fringe group that backed state violence in Tiananmen Square and supports the right-wing opposition in the Soviet Union. A member of the party, one Gavriella Gemma, became a secretary in Clark's law firm in 1977. When President Bush sent troops to the Persian Gulf in August, Gemma and her comrades set up the coalition, with Clark as its spokesperson and its headquarters adjacent to Clark's law offices.

The Workers World coalition refused to join with the other main group within the anti-war movement, the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, and pressed for American withdrawal without any sanctions against Iraq and without any condemnation of Saddam, whom Workers World regarded as a spearhead of Arab anti-imperialism. Endorsing Saddam's demand for linkage, the coalition also called for "an immediate end" to U.S. aid to Israel. One month after the coalition was founded, David McReynolds of the War Resisters' League met with Clark to ask him to dissociate himself from the Workers World Party's efforts. McReynolds, a longtime pacifist, warned Clark that the far-left sect was "using him," but Clark failed to respond, continually referring instead to what "Gavriella said."

McReynolds doesn't believe that Clark shares Workers World's tenets. Be that as it may, during the months in which the United States was trying to dislodge Saddam from Kuwait, Clark said nothing that diverged from the party line. On November 18, for example, in an interview on "Face the Nation" with Lesley Stahl, he refused to describe Saddam as an evil force. He merely said: "I don't judge people as good or evil. I know we invaded Panama. We took as many lives in Panama or perhaps more as he took in Kuwait. We certainly killed more—destroyed more habitations. We destroyed 30,000 peoples' homes there."

Clark also allowed himself to be used by Saddam. After a visit to Baghdad in November, when Saddam permitted some hostages to return with him, Clark called the dictator "flexible" and urged negotiations. In early February, during the height of the air war, Clark visited Basra and told a CNN interviewer that all the damage in that town was to civilian targets. "Crossing the city you see no military matériel being hit at all," Clark said. When CNN's Reid Collins persisted in asking Clark if he was aware that Basra was headquarters for the Iraqi military operation in the south, he grew indignant. "You didn't hear what I said. You ought to listen," Clark hissed.

What has gone wrong with Ramsey Clark? How could a distinguished former attorney general become an ally

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of neo-Stalinists and Third World autocrats and the defender of LaRouche? Clark remains a mystery even to his friends and colleagues. "I worked with him for five years and don't understand any of the engines behind his positions," says former partner Mel Wulf. Clark himself refused to respond to repeated requests for an interview, but from looking at his life over the last three decades, one can discover enduring traits and climactic events that may have contributed to his political and intellectual decline.

Clark is the son of Tom Clark, who served as attorney general in the Truman administration and as a Supreme Court justice from 1949 to 1967, resigning to avoid a conflict of interest when his son became attorney general. Ramsey Clark clearly shows signs of what one journalist, describing Jerry Brown's relation to his father, called "anti-Papa politics." Where Tom Clark was the ultimate party man and team player, his son was fiercely independent, to the point of intransigence. Where Tom Clark, the founder of the infamous "Attorney General's list," was a hard-line cold warrior—very supportive of civil rights but contemptuous of the rights of Communists whom he thought threatened the country—his son became a militant civil libertarian and eventually an ally of the people his father was willing to suppress.

RAMSEY CLARK BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Ramsey Clark's independence and support for constitutional principles served him well as attorney general, leading him to resist Lyndon Johnson's and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's attempts to use police state tactics against the anti-war and civil rights movements. But his insularity also reinforced a streak of dogmatism and unwillingness to listen to the advice of his peers. His colleagues in the Justice Department were surprised at his unwillingness to compromise. "Sometimes I think he has an absolute desire to die on principle," one subordinate told a *New York Times* reporter in 1967.

Throughout his career Clark also displayed what Roger Wilkins, a close friend and an assistant attorney general under him, calls a "sympathy for the underdog, and a contempt for the overdog." This stood him in good stead when, as attorney general, he found himself grappling with the grievances of civil rights militants and ghetto rioters. Wilkins describes Clark as the first white man he met who genuinely listened to what poor people and blacks had to say. But Clark's automatic sympathy also left him vulnerable to political con artists who tried to play on white or American guilt.

The constraints of government brought out the best in Clark, reining in his credulity and paranoia, and forcing him to defend and explain his decisions. But once he was out of office, his strengths turned into weaknesses. He became incapable of distinguishing between the self-appointed representatives of victims and the victims themselves; and because of his insularity and stubbornness he was impervious to the arguments of those who knew better. He listened to Qaddafi but ignored McReynolds. "Ramsey is a man who carries modesty to the point of arrogance. He doesn't listen," says former ACLU official Henry Schwarzchild, who worked with Clark on capital punishment cases.

There were two sets of events that pitched Clark out of the mainstream and into the hands of LaRouche and the Workers World Party. As attorney general Clark was by no means a radical or a leftist. Although he defended civil liberties against Hoover, he also prosecuted Dr. Benjamin Spock for trying to undermine the Selective Service laws. As late as 1968, while campaigning for Lyndon Johnson in Wisconsin, Clark was shouting at anti-war protesters to take their grievances to Hanoi rather than Washington. But Clark's last year in office was a personal disaster. Johnson, who had been a close friend of his family and a father figure to him, became very angry with him for allowing the Resurrection City demonstrations to drag on and embarrass the administration. Johnson did not even invite Clark to his farewell luncheon with Cabinet members and aides. At the same time Richard Nixon

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singled out Clark in his election campaign for undermining "law and order" in the country. Clark was innocent as charged—half the federal Mafia convictions since 1950 came during Clark's two years in office—but Nixon had never been one to worry about truth in campaigning.

Clark claimed afterward that he was unaffected by Johnson's slights and Nixon's calumny, but when he left office, he entered private political life with the abandon of a sailor on leave. He threw himself at every exotic cause and became a mark for every domestic and foreign liberator and liberation movement. He became the lawyer for anti-war activist Philip Berrigan; headed a commission to investigate the killings of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark; went to North Vietnam to condemn the U.S. bombing over the "Voice of Vietnam."

Clark also absorbed what remained of '60s New Left ideology, which, by the time he arrived in New York in 1970, had degenerated from participatory democracy to Workers World-style authoritarianism. According to a former law partner, Clark came to have a vision of "America driven by imperialist-type power, driven by its lust for hegemony throughout the world."

Yet Clark's radicalization was held in check by his two unsuccessful campaigns for U.S. Senate. In the second campaign, running in the 1976 Democratic primary against Bella Abzug and Daniel P. Moynihan, Clark even positioned himself in the center. In contrast to Abzug, for instance, he promised to support Moynihan if the former U.N. ambassador won the primary. But Clark's defeat, a former associate says, "dispirited him in a profound sort of way." As Clark resigned himself to being an outsider, he became more contemptuous of the insiders.

Clark adopted the pose of the witness—traveling throughout the world to observe what he would testify to be war crimes or violations of international law, reporting as undoctored fact events that had been carefully constructed by local spin doctors and information ministers. This was nowhere more evident than in Clark's first witnessing trip to the Mideast.

During the 1976 Senate campaign, Clark had been against Israel's negotiating with the PLO, but in the summer of 1979 he went on a trip to Lebanon that was sponsored by the Arab-American University Graduates—a group friendly to the PLO. The group's travels in Lebanon were supervised by PLO representatives. Afterward Clark held a press conference and published an article in *The Nation* condemning Israel's "genocidal" attacks against what he claimed were purely civilian targets.

In his *Nation* article he made no mention of who had sponsored or supervised his trip, but he did cite other members of the expedition as witnesses to what he had seen. That was too much for one of them, Max Holland, then a staff member of the Center for International Policy. Holland wrote a blistering reply in which he questioned Clark's statement that he saw no military targets in southern Lebanon. "Our group had neither free rein nor the knowledge to go wherever we chose, and thus a blanket assertion such as Mr. Clark's is indefensible," Holland wrote. "Evidence shows there are PLO military targets in nominally civilian areas, and to assert otherwise is to ignore the ugly little facts on one side but not on the other. Moreover, I distinctly remember eating a generous lunch and dinner in what I would consider a military target—it was a gathering place for PLO fighters—in the southern town of Nabatiyeh."

Clark would do this repeatedly over the years—posing as witness but in fact serving as a flack for a number of despots who sought his services. In Khomeini's Tehran in June 1980, while American hostages were in their eighth month of captivity, he joined in a forum on "Crimes of America," condemning Jimmy Carter's rescue mission as a violation of international law. After the United States bombed Libya in 1986, he went to Tripoli to condemn the Reagan administration's crimes, while ignoring those of his host. Clark also went to Grenada to advise Bernard and Phyllis Coard, leaders of the clique that was accused of murdering Maurice Bishop. As he told an incredulous Dennis King, Clark believed the CIA had murdered Bishop and then framed the Coards.

In some ways Clark's political odyssey resembles that of another former public servant: Henry Wallace. Wallace, perhaps the best secretary of agriculture the United States ever had, was a man of high moral principle who, like Clark, was an easy mark for political con men. In 1944, while vice president, Wallace visited Siberia at Moscow's invitation and upon his return wrote a glowing report comparing Soviet farming villages to those in his native Iowa. It later turned out that the village Wallace saw was a prison camp, quickly disguised for his arrival. After being fired by Harry Truman for cold war dissent (and after a stint as editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC), Wallace ran for president as the candidate of the Communist-dominated Progressive Party.

Both men were victimized by their own idealism. Wallace's vice was that he unbendingly sought to recreate the Popular Front New Deal of the mid-'30s in the cold war '40s. Clark's is that he is trying to re-create the late '60s in the early '90s. Styled as a radical, Clark is really an eccentric reactionary, a man who cannot escape his past.

Yet Clark remains a more mysterious and, perhaps, less wholesome figure than Wallace. Wallace retired to farming after his 1948 defeat, and after the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 repudiated both the Progressive Party and his former view of the cold war. But considering Clark's leadership of the Workers World coalition, one cannot easily imagine a set of events that would shake Clark's view of himself and his country.

Then there is the nagging question of whether Clark, who has close Jewish friends and associates, is nevertheless possessed by the demons of anti-Semitism. Clark

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gets more requests for his services than he can possibly take, and he chooses cases on merit rather than for money. Is there, then, some significance in the fact that some of Clark's best-known cases and clients—LaRouche, former Nazi Karl Linnas, and the defense of the PLO against the suit by the family of Leon Klinghoffer, who was murdered by Palestinian terrorists on the *Achille Lauro*—pit him directly or indirectly against Jews?

Clark's friends and associates insist he is not anti-Semitic. But one former associate, who asked not to be identified and who also maintained that Clark was not an anti-Semite, provided details that suggest otherwise. According to this former associate, Clark's choice of cases has been a subject of lively debate at his firm, and several times questions were explicitly raised about whether he was neglecting a Jewish client, a former CIA agent, in favor of the PLO. The Jewish client subsequently discharged Clark.

In defending the Estonian Linnas, convicted of lying about his wartime activities when as head of a Nazi concentration camp he oversaw the murder of 12,000 Eastern Europeans, including 2,000 Jews, Clark has publicly questioned the justice of pursuing Nazis "forty years after some god-awful crime they're alleged to have committed." But according to this associate, he goes beyond this, arguing that Estonian anti-Semitism is really anti-Soviet nationalism: "I once heard Ramsey Clark say that anti-Semitism is a very complex matter. . . . He probably has a whole range of thoughts about it that he very prudently doesn't share."

Surprising, there are still those who take Clark seriously. His appearances abroad make headlines, and he continues to be well thought of by some in the American left. The April issue of *The Progressive* contains a fawning interview with him, and *The Nation* provides him with a regular outlet for his fact-finding reports. The editor of *The Nation*, Victor Navasky, who managed Clark's 1974 Senate campaign, thinks the world of him. "Ramsey is in a legal tradition operating in the political arena," Navasky explains. "He is in the tradition of the great dissenters, Holmes, Black, and Brandeis, who say things that may turn out to be way ahead of their times, and were not appreciated in their own day."

Comments like this show the extent to which some leftists are, like Clark himself, living in the past, refighting the Vietnam War and imagining the ghost of J. Edgar Hoover lurking on their phone lines. And if Clark ever belonged to the tradition of Holmes, Black, and Brandeis, he has long departed it for the considerably less venerable path of Alton Maddox and Mark Lane. Once an honored defender of the rights of even the most disreputable, Clark has himself become disreputable, a man whose political meanderings—from Baghdad to Copenhagen—testify to the country's tolerance of even the crankiest dissenter. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fantasies

With luck, someday we'll have legislation governing the use of the afterlife in films. An examining committee, equally balanced with members under 25 and over 75, will determine whether a proposed film is an imaginative addition to the vast store of previous films in the field or whether it is just more gift-wrapped theology, blatant wish fulfillment. Most films in every genre add little to antecedents, but there's something tinnily gnomic about the bulk of afterlife pictures that makes them especially irritating. We need protection.

Such a committee would, I think, flunk Albert Brooks. They might be as disappointed as I was in this latest work from the writer-director-star of the quietly sharp *Real Life* and *Lost in America*. His new film, **Defending Your Life** (Warner Bros.), is an afterlife opus that adds zero to the field; it just chews along gummily.

Its setting is a place called Judgment City, to which all people go right after death. In that place are courts that judge whether people have done well in their earthly lives. If so, they go forward to some sort of reincarnation elsewhere; if not, they go back to earth, unconscious of this celestial experience, to be born again otherwise and to try again. Every deceased person gets a three-day trial, before two judges, with a prosecutor and a defense attorney. Relevant moments from the defendant's entire life are screened. (We're on camera for all of our earthly lives—cheery thought.)

Of this apparatus, Brooks makes little use. His screenplay is almost as much explanation—of the apparatus—as story. It's so thin that in his three-day trial, Brooks, who plays the male lead, has to give himself a different lawyer on Day Two just to provide a little variety.

Brooks also directed, without distinction. His Judgment City looks like a set of rejects for the next World's Fair, frequently rendered with the help of matte shots. (These shots match foreground action with painted backgrounds.) He himself is much less engaging, has much less owlish charm, than in *Broadcast News* or in his own previous films.

Here his character is an LA advertising executive who is killed during his first drive in his new BMW and who arrives at Judgment City with a record of nonbravery. An instant romance with Meryl Streep, also newly arrived, provides him with a last chance to redeem himself with a courageous act—which act, by the way, contravenes all the laws of Judgment City that Screenwriter Brooks has so carefully set up. Once again a screenplay about afterlife establishes cosmic laws, then sweeps them aside for plot convenience.

A subject that afterlife fantasies often raise blithely, then disregard, is the corporeality of their characters. Often there is eating and drinking, as here, but we never hear anything about digestive functions in the disembodied. Brooks adds another dilemma. In a key scene the man and the woman discuss the possibility of sex. Does this mean condoms in Paradise? Or, if not, possible pregnancy?

The most important subject that the picture raises is the career of Meryl Streep. What in the world—or in that world—is she doing in this film? At least 100 other women could have played her role, not always with the technical finish and the few flushes of genuine feeling that she brings to it but as well as the picture deserves. Streep's presence is not much more needed here than it would be as the girl in a vaudeville act who hands the juggler the ninepins. She has made some odd choices lately, this picture and *She-Devil*. Obviously she wants to keep her work varied; still, it ought to be work, not waste.

As for Brooks, down to earth next time, I hope. Earthier and funnier.

A new documentary maker named Jennie Livingston has been working since 1985 on an aspect of black life, of gay life, that may be as unknown to others as it was to me. **Paris Is Burning** (Off-White Productions) is about the "balls," which originated in Harlem, that black gays hold. These balls are really fashion shows of a kind, in which the participants parade before the audience either in wild dresses of their own devising or in "straight" male clothes—business executive, military man—that seem no less wild on the persons wearing them.

Each ball has contests, with a board of judges. Awards are in a number of categories and are taken with utmost seriousness by the participants. Out of these occasions have grown a vocabulary

FILMS WORTH SEEING

City Zero. *Some bitter comedy and some tingles in this Kafkaesque nightmare from the Soviet Union. A Moscow visitor to a small town slips further and further into a bureaucratic and social morass. (Reviewed 4/8/91)* **Class Action.** *A Hollywood entertainment that really entertains. The basic gimmick: a father and daughter are lawyers who face each other in a big case. The dialogue is crisp. Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is fine. Gene Hackman is superb. (4/15/91)* **The Doors.** *Val Kilmer is scowlingly strong as Jim Morrison in Oliver Stone's overlong, overdone but pulsating saga of the 1960s rock group. (4/1/91)* **The Vanishing.** *George Sluizer's thriller, set in Holland and France, is more subtle and intelligent and therefore more scary than most items in this genre. (3/4/91)* —**SK**

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and a set of hierarchies. Participants are grouped by a fashion-house title—the House of Saint Laurent, for instance. (They have no actual connection with those well-known designers.) Each House has a Mother, a chief, and the House becomes the non-violent gay equivalent of a street gang. "Voguing" is a ball category in which contestants mimic the movement and poses of high-fashion models. "Shade" is a term describing put-down or abuse. There are more than twenty such terms.

Paris Is Burning, which has already won some prizes, is having its theatrical premiere at the Film Forum in New York and will probably be shown elsewhere. I wish it had a different title: this one is based on a reference in the film, but ahead of time it's misleading. Otherwise, it's adequately made—I'd almost say valiantly made because, considering the money struggle that Livingston and her colleagues underwent to get it done, the technical aspects are surprisingly good.

Clearly Livingston did the essential for a documentary that depends heavily on interviews: she got the confidence of her subjects. They speak to her openly, these people for whom defensive artifice and performance are the norm. (One of the many topics discussed is sex-change operations, on which there are conflicting opinions.) Some of them, especially the older ones, are impressively articulate: some are doing their best to impaste elegance on a background of little education and stunted opportunity.

These balls are self-evidently a form of theater. All fashion shows are theater, of course, staged to sell clothes in aid of sexuality. These balls, however, are quite different. They have nothing to do with sales and, gay though they are, seem to have less to do with sex-promoting than the Paris shows. These shows have more to do with hurt.

I saw my first avowedly gay theater presentation, an off-off-Broadway musical, about twenty-five years ago. Some genuine talents were in it, but beneath all the swooping and swirling and parading and nonchalance was, I felt, anguish. The show seemed a sublimated scream against society's prejudiced treatment of the people who were cavorting in order to soothe themselves.

This documentary is about something even worse: because the people are black and because, on the evidence here, they have not much talent for anything except lurid costuming. It's a document of despair striking back with parades. *Paris Is Burning* shows the rest of us a discomfiting truth. The fact that a documentary like this can now be shot and shown is no excuse for a society that makes it necessary. ●

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The last true believer, and why he's still kicking.

The Autumn of the Caudillo

BY ARTURO CRUZ JR. AND CONSUELO CRUZ SEQUEIRA

In Spanish America, passion has always been the great transformer of human reality, and verbal eloquence its magic. The poet reigns as the supreme hero after death; and in life, even for the humble man, the will to power becomes inextricable from the will to dominate metaphor and wit. The shoeshine boy masters the art of naming passers-by after the animals and the objects they resemble. The parvenus take comfort in the knowledge that a clever public insult can rend the smart garment of a notable's social esteem. Ancestral enemies, when they decide to reach a truce, first engage in a ritual of mutual praise. Eulogists turn funerals into contests of rhetorical prowess, and seek not so much to lament the dead as to rob the dead of the mourners' attention and thus defy death. The caudillo delivers an oration from noon till dusk in an effort to do nothing less than recast the identity of his nation; his aim is to stupefy his audience, to make his people forget the memorable, remember the forgettable, and swallow a fiction or a lie.

The caudillo's name is Fidel, and sometimes he seems close to success in his ambition to eradicate the boundary between story and history, and turn his nation's sacrifice, even its tedium, into the fulfillment of its old, fantastic yearnings. It is not an easy task. Among Spanish Americans, Cubans are the most imaginative, going so far as to claim that before Atlantis was plunged to the bottom of the ocean, it was located not west of Gibraltar, as legend has it, but in the Caribbean, near to their favored island.

They are the most indefatigable and persuasive talkers, too. The massive migration of Spaniards into Cuba during the first three decades of this century turned into a great collective conversation between the newly arrived and the island's more established residents. Bound by their common Iberian roots, these motley interlocutors talked obsessively about how the United States had not only snatched Cuba from Spain, but also robbed the island of its grandeur. And about how Mexico, their competitor for glory, was the first to betray the mother country in the early nineteenth century, while Cuba was the very last. They also vowed that Cuba would one day be the key to the Caribbean; that economically it would be not a mere agricultural exporter, but an industrial power. As if in a trance, they even concluded wishfully that the smokestacks of their country's sugar refineries were no different from the smokestacks of Manchester, England.

Guerrilla Prince:
The Untold Story of Fidel Castro
by Georgie Anne Geyer
(Little, Brown, 445 pp., $22.95)

Imaginative, ambitious, masters of verbal mesmerism: such are the Cubans, and such is Fidel, who sent soldiers to fight in Africa and thus realized the old Spanish-American dream of crossing the oceans to land troops on another continent; who, while living off Soviet subsidies, reinvigorated the world's image of socialism, presenting an invaluable gift of tropical youth to the pale elders in the Kremlin while standing up to the United States only ninety miles away; who became, by 1978, both an object of admiration, indeed a battle cry, in Spanish America, where abject dependence on the Soviet Union was pardoned as long as their leader—that young eminence both revolutionary and wise—defied the North.

For many Spanish Americans, Fidel was equal to the challenge. Intellectuals liked to observe that he was a kind of modern Simón Bolívar. After all, that first Spanish-American liberator had been willing to deliver his new nations into the hands of England in order to counter the threat of the United States. And he, too, had been doubtful of the potential for civic excellence in peoples who are racially hybrid, poor, and uneducated. In the opinion of Bolívar, extraordinary men, not democracy, would lead the nations of Spanish America to their meeting with universal history. To be more precise, men like Fidel—a humane landlord who looked after the welfare of his peons; an intellectual with sufficient courage to remember José Martí's suicidal gallop against Spanish troops; a uniformed standard-bearer of tradition, willing to reaffirm the intrinsic value of heroic death; and above all, a success.

A success, because by 1978 Fidel had conquered all (except the dismal inefficiency of Cuba's socialist economy). Central America was caught up in revolution, with the FSLN about to take power in Nicaragua and the FMLN waiting its turn in El Salvador. The United States, by way of contrast, seemed politically and spiritually defeated by Vietnam: confused about its proper international role, yet clear (as stated by the Carter administration) about the need for a new beginning that would include a renegotiated relationship with Castro's Cuba. By 1978, then, Fidel could plausibly set the terms for the rapprochement. He seemed likely to obtain American recognition of the Cuban revolution, and dollars, too: as part of the rapprochement, the prosperous Cuban community in exile, the ones whom Fidel had labeled "worms," would be allowed to visit their country of origin for a steep dollar fee.

The stakes were so high that Fidel, to show his seriousness, selected two trusted men to be his envoys to the negotiations in Washington. One was José Luís Padrón, the first leader of Cuban troops in Angola, where he had performed bravely and was wounded by a land mine. The other was Colonel Tony de la Guardia, from the Ministry of the Interior's "special forces," a group of men so reliable and loyal to Fidel that they were in charge of his yacht and his airplane. Tony de la Guardia, like his twin brother, Patricio, was an exemplar of the type of man Fidel likes to have in his inner circle: a superb sportsman, a connoisseur of pleasure, a valiant adventurer, and a linen-clad vagabond of the labyrinth of intelligence and counterintelligence.

The twins were very close to one another and to the caudillo, for whom Tony was the favorite, almost like a son. Tony was assigned the sensitive duties of handling the caudillo's petty cash and of circumventing the American blockade in search of hard currency and luxury goods. During his trip to the United States, Tony did well in the negotiations with the State Department. But he was also reunited with his family in exile; and he rediscovered the vitality and the temptation of capitalism. He returned to

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Cuba secretly awed, and restless.

The exiles, too, began returning to their island—sentimental tourists determined to impress and to shower their socialist relatives with consumer goods. Fidel watched their arrival with equanimity, firm in the conviction that his society would prove invulnerable to the corrupting influence of the spendthrifts from New Jersey and Florida. After all, his people had read Marx and Engels, had mastered the dialectic. His bureaucrats and cadres were obedient and efficient, able to execute any order issued by the Party in Havana or in the most remote corner of the island. And his Ministry of the Interior was an extensive and sophisticated apparatus of social control.

Fidel turned out to be justified in his confidence, but only partially. Thousands of politically illiterate matrons arrived in Cuba, each bearing five suitcases full of shoes and jeans, medicines and small electrical appliances. They typically circulated two photographs among their relatives and former neighbors. In one, there appeared either a shiny Ford sedan or a secondhand Cadillac; in the other, a free-standing swimming pool in a small backyard. And they told stories about life in America, tales of hard work rewarded; of a bundle of small freedoms; of political clout won through activism; and of the exiles' melancholy attachment to the island of their birth.

The emotional and material eloquence of the returning exiles overwhelmed the dialectic. Fidel began to feel the related pressures of consumerist demands and increasing discontent among the younger generations. So he decided to tolerate, even to legalize, limited private economic activity under the five-year plan for 1981-85, which he legitimated with parallels to Lenin's NEP. Though they were still expected to deliver their mandatory quotas to the state, peasants were now allowed to sell their surplus (except export commodities such as beef and tobacco) in the free market. Small businesses proliferated, hidden ones surfaced, new ones opened—plumbing and watch-repair services, selected artisanal industries. Private cobblers, for example, began to supply the market with uncomfortable and expensive shoes, which consumers snatched up in an instant.

Young men let their hair grow long, even longer than Che's, expressing a pent-up rebelliousness in a style that elsewhere in the world was already outmoded. Born in the revolution, the long-hairs had grown up as its negation: New Men who in their fantasies rejected heroic death and longed for the marvel of ordinary life with its stable boundary between the public and the private. "Fidel is crazy," declared the long-hairs. Naturally their dissipation and their degeneracy profoundly offended Fidel, as did the acquisitive compulsion of the "individualist mercenaries." "Imagine," Fidel exclaimed in moral outrage, "a *guajiro* [peasant] made 100,000 pesos selling onions and garlic!"

As early as 1981 it was clear to Fidel that his rapprochement with the United States had turned into a nightmare. It had produced political defiance and moral degradation, and it concluded with the ascent of Ronald Reagan. Already Fidel had been forced to open the island momentarily, in the spring of 1980, to expel the troublemakers, including criminals and the insane. Unfortunately for Fidel, in less than six months approximately 120,000 people left Cuba in noisy desperation. And the embarrassing spectacle came at a most inopportune time, when unfathomable changes were about to take place in the Soviet Union. Its sturdy people, Fidel would be baffled to learn, felt debilitated by their experience in Afghanistan, much like the Americans after Vietnam. And like his own Cubans, they were becoming eager to consume, and to think and to talk. Worst of all, however, for the first time their "maximum leader"—Mikhail Gor-

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bachev—was younger than Fidel.

The world simply lost its head over Gorbachev and his two novelties, perestroika and glasnost, but Fidel, who was battling the complications of his own reforms, remained unimpressed. By 1986 he had made up his mind to launch a rectification campaign—a full retreat to orthodoxy, which he believed the Soviets, too, unlike the countries of East Central Europe, would eventually have to join. Simultaneously he pursued another grandiose project: the development of a domestic nuclear energy industry, which he entrusted to his son Fidelito (the very image of his father as a young man—same beard and profile, same charisma). The nuclear industry proved a disappointment, as did the tourism industry, with its low numbers of vacationers and its politically progressive but non-spending Canadians and Spaniards, who complicated matters by expecting polite and serviceable waiters—a double oxymoron in Cuba.

It was amid such trials and tribulations that the formidable caudillo, the magician of eloquence, suffered the worst of blows: betrayal by his own creatures. One of them was General Arnaldo Ochoa, the soldier with the impeccable record of valor and independence. In the Sierra, Ochoa had fought not in Raúl Castro's column, or under Fidel, but with Camilo Cienfuegos, so that after the revolutionary triumph he was unique among the officers of highest rank. (Raúl controlled the hierarchy of the armed forces, while Fidel's people, in the main, staffed the Ministry of the Interior.) Ochoa had also waged guerrilla warfare in Venezuela, and later he attended the Soviet Academy, where he excelled. Upon graduation, he accompanied his caudillo on trips around the world. When Fidel went to Chile to inspect the local revolution, Ochoa stood behind Comandante Castro, while Augusto Pinochet stood behind President Allende. Later Ochoa directed the Ethiopian campaign; then the counterinsurgency operation in Nicaragua; and from there he went on to Angola. Finally, in the late 1980s, Ochoa returned home.

By then, a younger generation of army officers tended to look with disdain on the aging veterans of the Sierra—a "picnic," they claimed it was, compared with the African battles. But they held Ochoa, with his exceptional history, in the highest esteem. Ochoa, too, thought well of himself and behaved like a Roman general returning in victory from the imperial frontier. Accustomed to being undisputed ruler on the field, Ochoa was now condescending toward bureaucrats and ministers, and set out to expand his base of power: in addition to being named commander of the troops of the Western army, he insisted on control of the Western air force squadrons and navy battalions as well. Worse yet, Ochoa began to do favors for the veterans of the African campaigns. He became an accomplished gift giver; he gave fountain pens, vacation trips abroad, cars, construction material, motorcycles, Sony products, and most important, Rolex watches—all of which he gave not in Fidel's name, but in his own.

Ochoa, in short, was becoming a caudillo. And enslaved by the logic of a caudillo's incessant generosity to subordinates, followers, and allies, he became fully cognizant of the true value of the dollar. He was now in the grip of what Raúl Castro later described as a narcissistic delirium of populism. This delirium led Ochoa to increasingly undignified behavior: in an effort to finance his largess, the bemedaled revolutionary began to sell bantam roosters, contraband weapons, high-grade wood—and drugs. In these dealings Ochoa had the collaboration of the de la Guardia twins. Patricio, whom he had met in Angola, had introduced him to his brother Tony, the dollar man, and soon the three were thinking big. Their plans eventually came to include the establishment of trade links with the Colombian drug cartels and the extension of supply networks to the African market. And, more important, the introduction of perestroika and glasnost in Cuba.

FIDEL CASTRO BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The twins' institutional home, the Ministry of the Interior, became hopelessly imbued with the spirit of reform. Fidel, by contrast, seemed weary and old-fashioned. In the spring of 1989, when Gorbachev visited the island of youth, palms, and rum, he found a Fidel who, with his shaggy, silvery beard and a hint of despondent perplexity in his opaque eyes, looked like Santa Claus stranded in the tropics. Gorbachev, normally ebullient, seemed somewhere between impatience and boredom as the old caudillo reached for the microphone. In his speech, Fidel slowly reduced the leader of the Soviet Union to the role of a child who must be taught the fundamentals of socialism. The aged Fidel dug in his heels and held up the mirror of its future to the Soviet Union. But Gorbachev turned away and abandoned the obstinate Cubans to their life of theater.

And it was a theater of dangerous words and conspiratorial gestures, in which protagonists like Ochoa displayed characteristic pride and recklessness. Not only did Ochoa begin to use the informal "*tú*" with Fidel, he even made public references to the caudillo's age. He would crack jokes at the old man's expense, remarking that Fidel could no

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longer remember where he left his cigar butts. It was all too much. On June 11, 1989, Fidel and Raúl took the decision to imprison Ochoa, his aides, and the de la Guardia twins and their assistants. A special court-martial was promptly arranged, with an eye to involving every high-ranking military officer in the trial of one of the most decorated heroes of the revolution.

The interrogation of Ochoa was conducted by Raúl, a man of legendary coldness. In the course of the interrogation, he repeatedly mentioned the name of Ochoa's son, Alejandro, who as an infant had been chosen to bear Fidel's nom de guerre. These allusions must have tormented Ochoa, one moment restoring him to the days when he and Fidel had been bound by unquestionable loyalty, the next moment delivering the tacit warning that if he did not cooperate, Fidel would not spare Alejandrito. Finally Ochoa confessed to the crimes of high treason and corruption.

On the eve of Ochoa's execution, Fidel requested to see the condemned. But Ochoa, who like Fidel hailed from Oriente, the Cuban province of iron-fisted patresfamilias and chiefs, declined to see his caudillo. The two sons of Oriente understood that mercy was inconceivable under the circumstances. Tony de la Guardia, on the other hand, did talk to Fidel, hoping for a last-moment pardon from the man who had been like a father to him. But there was nothing to be done. Ochoa and his closest assistant, as well as Tony de la Guardia and his assistant, were shot—on their knees, with their backs to the firing squad, like traitors. The execution took place in the Cabaña barracks, behind the Morro, the magnificent colonial fortress that had loyally defended Havana's bay from the attacks of English pirates, and where Che had sent countless Batista supporters to their deaths in 1959.

As is the case with all important news in Cuba, a very brief, inconspicuous announcement appeared in the July 13, 1989, edition of *Granma*: "Sentence of special military tribunal, applied." Significantly, Tony's twin brother, Patricio, was allowed to live—perhaps because the inseparable Castro brothers understood that to spare him was to punish him. The minister of the interior (Fidel's former chief bodyguard) was sent to prison, where he suffered a fatal heart attack.

Thus began the dismantling of the Ministry of the Interior, the Cuban KGB that had become a nest of bon vivant reformers. Its officers were purged, jailed, or shoved into the "Pajama Program," whereby the reformers were sent home to wait in their cotton jammies for one of three possible outcomes: rehabilitation, prison, or an administrative post in one of the island's more obscure reaches. As they went out the door, in came their replacements: Raúl's austere counterintelligence military officers (which explains the utter lack of tact recently shown by the ministry in the treatment of dissidents, as well as the militarization of neighborhood defense committees).

And so Cuba entered the time of redoubled intransigence. Fidel sought a rapprochement with China. The stylish Moscow Restaurant, once frequented by officers of the Interior in love with perestroika, was set on fire by a mysterious hand. The defunct Peking Restaurant was reopened, and honored by Fidel's patronage on opening night. Also, not insignificantly, Fidel clung with special tenacity to his friendship with Gabriel García Márquez, the great Colombian novelist who perfected the combination of magic and realism. Fidel was convinced that nobody understood his soul more intimately than this Tolstoy of Spanish America. Might not the protagonist of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* be read as pure, eternal Fidel? And hadn't that magnificent book accomplished precisely what he, Fidel, had striven for in all of his feverish waking hours: the irrevocable union of dream and truth? García Márquez was worthy of sharing in the patriarch's solitude.

Today the patriarch sits on the edge of an abyss and gambles with his country's future, betting inwardly on the inevitability of a rectification campaign in the Soviet Union. (His nemesis Gorbachev seems to be obliging him.) Fidel is buying time at home by telling obdurate would-be reformers the cautionary tale of the Ortega brothers in Nicaragua, while in the same breath implying that reforms might just be part of the agenda at the upcoming Cuban Party Congress; keeping hope alive among the population by insinuating that another Mariel is not unlikely; welcoming, at times even contributing to, the rumors about his various mysterious illnesses, for he knows that such rumors also serve as comforting reminders of his mortality; imagining, perhaps correctly, that Kremlin hard-liners are already arguing vehemently against a retreat from the Americans' lake and in favor of further rewarding the Cuban faithful; watching the Central Bank's international reserves dwindle to $100 million dollars and the price of sugar in the world market to nine cents a pound; fuming about the 20 percent reduction in the supply of

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Soviet petroleum; refusing to admit that total Soviet aid might be cut by 75 percent by the end of 1991; speechifying on those dreaded black and red Sundays of voluntary labor; telling Cubans that the various destinies of the world revolutionary movement are at stake in the single destiny of Cuba's revolution; wagering that in his old age he will become the father of a new world socialism.

So who is this man? Georgie Anne Geyer's book deliberately ignores the question of Fidel's Marxist identity, on the correct assumption that even an accurate answer would finally prove less interesting than the question of his identity as a caudillo. From his very beginnings, Fidel has been a Creole leader in search of a discipline. He was passionate about his tribe, lyrical about the blood spilled heroically in its battles, and enamored of Napoleon's deeds and Mussolini's words. He was a close student of other people's weaknesses and enough of a realist to grasp the exuberant and disorderly character of his followers from the Sierra. In his soul, in other words, he was a caudillo. But the method that this caudillo chose was the Communist one.

Fidel had as much use for communism as communism had for Fidel. Communism provided him with what he most needed: a scientific approach to power. He knew that the Fidelistas were willing to die for him; but that meant also that they could not be relied upon for serene bureaucratic efficiency. For such skills, he turned to Communists like Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. Indeed, the coherence of Fidel's revolution was owed precisely to his manipulation of these tensions. It was on the incessant feud between his loyal but irrepressible soldiers and his rigorous but cynical cadres that he built his rule.

Geyer sets out to paint a portrait of the man in his cultural and historical setting. Details that a social scientist might have dismissed as trivial Geyer astutely identifies as essential. She understands that in certain places rumor is the origin of "fact," that locality and family are the schools of politics, that the caudillo is a hybrid of native culture and imported ideology. Geyer has cleverly made her portrait of Castro a collective enterprise: she allowed Cuban sources to guide her research, and Cuban voices to constitute her narrative. The result is an intuitive, richly textured account of a supremely Spanish-American phenomenon.

Her Cuban sources led the author to inquire into the significance of being born a Galician, like Fidel's father, Angel Castro. And to learn about Galicia—that land of beauty and poverty, where migration is a perennial necessity and people live and die by a work ethic in which the locals figure as the only reliable individuals in the world; a land where men long ago came to believe that only as tyrants could they withstand the tyranny of life. Galicia was the birthplace of General Franco, who used to see Fidel not as a Communist but as the son of a neighbor back home, and whom Fidel saw not as a Fascist dictator, but as one of his father's neighbors and the extraordinary Galician who vindicated the honor of Galicia, long deprecated by the rest of Spain.

Geyer also learned that Cuba, like Spain, is a collection of localities, and that in Cuba, too, a man's locality stamps his character. So she talked to Cubans who know Oriente, the province where Fidel's father, like so many Spanish immigrants, came to settle between 1900 and 1930. She learned about these would-be *señores* who wanted to rule, despotically if necessary, over the blacks and the *guajiros*, whom they saw as part of the unruly landscape; *señores* who, like Fidel's father, themselves retained the predilections, the views, and the habits of *guajiros*. Fidel's father, for example, abandoned his first wife to begin a new life with the household cook, Lina Ruz, a veritable amazon who gave birth to most of his children, including Ramón, Fidel, and Raúl. Later Lina Ruz married Angel, but she remained the cook, serving meals for the father, the children, and the peons, all of whom ate at the same table.

As in medieval times, the Oriente table was the stage for feasts and the arena for political competitions. It was at the table, for example, that the loquacious Fidel displaced his older but less talented brother Ramón, so that when time came for the paterfamilias to choose the future champion of the clan's advancement he anointed the younger of the two boys. It was Fidel, not Ramón, who was sent to study with the Jesuits. (Today Ramón is the keeper of his younger brother's prized cows.)

At the Jesuits' school in Belén, Fidel mingled with the best of Cuban society, for the Society of Jesus, as usual, insisted on a student body that brought together intellectual talent and social distinction. It was also there that Fidel first acquired his reputation as a *loco*, the label that in Spanish America is automatically applied to non-conformists. At the same time, however, the priests, and even some of the boys, recognized that if Fidel was mad, he was also privileged; that he had a special destiny, perhaps because he was enough of an individual to express the Cuban essence. Fidel was both himself and a caricature of the typical Cuban: he was daring, generous, and an unabashed narcissist determined to control center-stage. At times, though, he was taciturn, and selflessly aware of socioeconomic inequities. One of the priests who taught him remembers that "Fidel was a good boy, concerned with the poor."

Perhaps Fidel's sensibility is owed in part to the experience of growing up with the unstoppable rumors about his mother's adultery, and the related, humiliating question: Who is the real father of Raulito, the youngest of the Castro boys? Some gossips traced the paternity back to a small-time Chinese merchant; others countered that Raulito was the son of an army officer. Either way, young Fidel felt the pain that comes from blemished family honor.

These voices—intimate friends and relatives of Fidel—speak from the depth of their memory to depict "the monster" whom they resignedly accept as the object of their fascination. They provide vital clues to the source of Fidel's sense of invincibility: his father, for example, though a frugal and rustic landowner himself, knew to pamper his son by buying him a car when he went to study law in Havana. And they introduce us to the pervasiveness of local jealousies in Cuba: at the university Fidel became immersed in gangster politics, as rival gangs of students struggled for control of the institution. Characteristically, Fidel fought for personal pre-eminence among the gangsters, a goal he accomplished through theatrical audacity and brilliant timing; and later he distanced himself from them by publicly condemning their methods.

These voices tell us, too, about the historic fixation of the Cuban bourgeoisie: public honesty. Long ashamed of their country's rampant government corruption, this class identified revolution with integrity. In the view of well-bred politicians, to propose a cleanup operation was to speak like a radical; and they were all radicals. The symbol of the Orthodox Party was a broom, a symbol that the Party's founder, the righteous Eduardo Chibás, had valiantly wrested from the leader of the Authentics, the charming Carlos Prío Socarrás, who had become both president of the republic and thoroughly corrupt. Chibás, like Fidel, was a passionate man, a magician of eloquence, and a bit of a *loco*. Geyer writes:

> Chibás, who was recognized by many (including Fidel Castro) as the political genius of the time, came (not unexpectedly) to blows with the Prío government. It began when Aureliano Sanchez Arango, Prío's minister of education, called Chibás a "master of defamation, dictator, irresponsi-

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ble, lacking in patriotism, ambitious, lying, useless, mediocre, mendacious, feudal, exploiter, miserable, a man of no honor and a false apostle of the lie, demagoguery, and calumny."

In reality, Chibás was a man with an acute sense of honor, who rose to his own defense by accusing the minister of defrauding the public schools to buy a ranch in Guatemala. It was an accusation that the paladin of integrity could not substantiate, and the knowledge of his own lie consumed him. Still, as has often been the case in Spanish America, Chibás soon found himself involved in a war of words of growing proportions: the entire country followed his debate—mostly an exchange of insults—with the minister. Almost compulsively, Chibás also went on preaching the virtues he espoused. "Honor, honor, honor," he chanted into the microphone of his Sunday-morning radio talk. Cuba came to a standstill at the sound of his voice.

But poor Chibás was about to surrender to the self-destructive forces of the tradition he represented. Geyer's description of Chibás's suicide in 1951, which he planned as a public event, to take place on the air, is at once moving and funny. By the time Chibás finally shot himself—he got carried away by his own eloquent tribute to Cuba's potential greatness—the sound engineer had cut him off. Also masterful is Geyer's description of Fidel's manic appropriation of Chibás's cadaver and funeral, both of which he used as props in a spontaneously crafted yet brilliantly self-serving play—a play that even featured a chorus of women who wept inconsolably for several days after the coffin was interred.

By the time the wailers stopped, Fidel had become the new all-Cuban boy, the descendant of Spaniards who would soon wage an all-Cuban crusade against the dictator Batista: mulatto, sergeant, detestably corrupt politico, upstart. The *loco* had become the leader of the all-Cuban romantics and idealists. His attack on the Moncada fortress in 1953, though it was obviously futile, was not seen as a folly but as a symbol of hope. And Fidel's parting words as he left for Mexico in exile—"I shall return!"—were no mere promise, they were a prediction.

Now everyone who met Fidel believed his words, most of all the women who became his loving devotees. As Geyer shows, Fidel's women have given him solace, energy, and descendants. They also pamper him; organize his hectic life; and remember him, whether he discards them like worn-out toys or retains them as diligent assistants and prudent confidants. In *Guerrilla Prince*, a self-abnegating woman stands behind Fidel at every significant point: the years of clandestine activities in the capital; the guerrilla struggle in the mountains; the triumphal march into Havana; the revolutionary executions; the Bay of Pigs; the missile crisis; the consolidation of power and the institutionalization of the revolution.

Real Cubans evoke all these moments in Geyer's book, and in the process they unwittingly become part of the portrait they paint—the setting, once more, for Fidel's play. It is a portrait in which talent bows to audacity: Max Lesnick, a brilliant analyst and writer, and an intimate friend of Fidel's in his youth, remains to this day in awe of the man's astounding boldness. And erudition gazes intently at the enigma of the caudillo: Luís Aguilar, a scholar whose knowledge of Cuban history is profound, still seeks to understand what makes an ordinary Cuban in the plaza shout Castro's name for hours. Lesnick likes to tell a story that he believes captures Fidel and the contradiction he shares with his people. Before the revolution, the story goes, Fidel's brother-in-law Rafael Díaz-Balart was first the leader of the Batista youth, then a member of Batista's Cabinet. Rafael's high posi-

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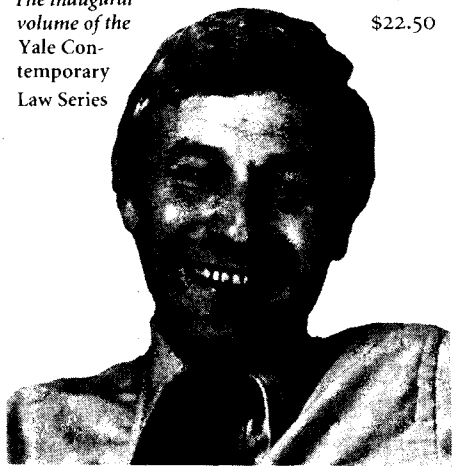

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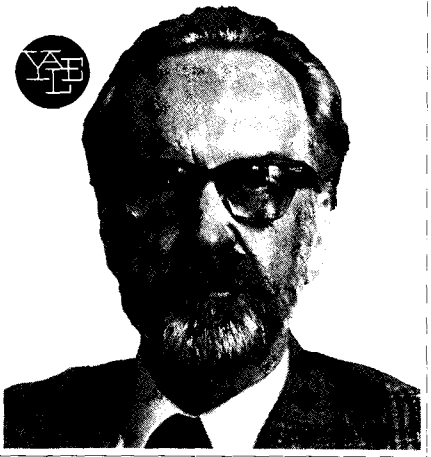

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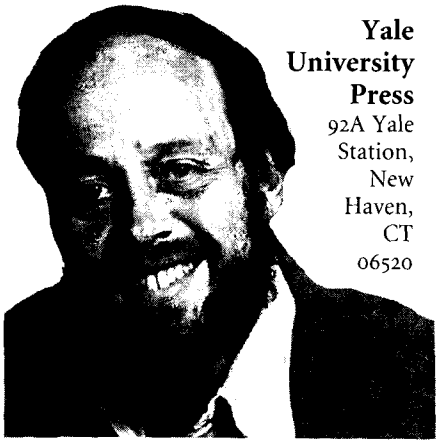

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tion had for years somewhat protected Fidel from the authorities. Still, on the day Fidel entered Havana in victory, his brother-in-law had already fled Cuba. "Where is Rafael?" Fidel asked anxiously amid the jubilation. "He's left," came the reply. "Good, good," Fidel muttered, relieved not to have to shoot his relative.

Time has passed since then; and as passion tires, its language becomes simple, almost tender. Just the other day Lesnick ran into Díaz-Balart in Little Havana, Miami. They chatted. Lesnick: "Did you see the picture of Fidelito?" Díaz-Balart: "Yes, yes. Saw the nephew. He's a fine one; he looks just like his papá." Simple words that are echoed on the island. "Fidel is our papá!" Raúl Castro rails at his officers toward the end of Geyer's book.

Geyer concludes her book appropriately, with the report of a conversation held in Spanish between a Cuban and an American: Fidel Castro and General Vernon Walters, who in 1982 was Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations. The conversation was significant in that Walters drew conclusions from it that convinced the Reagan administration not to seek a rapprochement with Cuba. Walters, writes Geyer, "was convinced that the United States, being the historic nemesis that inspired Castro's true animus, had nothing Castro wanted and that, if he were to come to our side, he would be only 'like the president of a banana republic.' "

But that, of course, is precisely the reason for the United States to reverse its policy of isolation and to seek a rapprochement. As Fidel himself argues, his failures do not matter as long as he can make the claim that he turned his country into the nightmare of the colossus of the North. But if the colossus awakens from the nightmare and establishes commercial and diplomatic relations with Cuba, Fidel's failures will finally matter.

The United States can kill Castro and Castroism with kindness. A reversal of the American policy of isolating Cuba would represent not a denial of that policy's validity, but its final success. The profound contradictions of Fidel's system would not disappear immediately, but they would be absorbed into a process of change that he could neither defeat nor control. It would not change Fidel, of course; but it would profoundly alter the way in which Cubans perceive him, and it would embolden them.

The establishment of full commercial relations between the United States and Cuba would capture the starved imagination of the island's consumers, while the Cuban economy, if it is left unreformed, will continue to lack the hard currency required for a serious position in the international market. At the same time, the removal of obstacles to free travel would allow the Cuban community in exile, for decades a frustrated spectator from afar, to become a participant in Cuban social life once more, to converse regularly with its compatriots, to help shape the expectations that are bred by discontent. And full diplomatic relations between the governments of the United States and Cuba would enable the former to support more fully dissent against the latter, and to speak for the interests of political dissidents and prisoners of conscience on the island. The United States would be in a position to demand of other democracies, Spain most significantly, that they finally accord the recognition that is long overdue to the dissidents and their struggle.

To expose Cubans to new opportunities, to new temptations, and to new ideas would be to dispel the memory of the young and mystical Fidel. It would destroy, at long last, the myth that hangs alluringly like a veil over the Franco of Cuba. ●

Homage to Catalonia

By Elizabeth Cowling

A Life of Picasso, Volume I: 1881-1906 by John Richardson with the collaboration of Marilyn McCully

(Random House, 548 pp., $39.95)

There have been so many biographies of Picasso. Do we really need another? Haven't we heard enough, from insiders or outsiders, about his colorful life and his irrepressible genius? And do we really need a biography as monumental as John Richardson's promises to be? (Three further volumes are announced.) But Richardson, in his enthralling first installment, silences all objections. His will surely be the definitive biography of Picasso. It is an essential resource for scholars and, thanks to his unfailingly lucid and unpretentious style, an ideal book for the general reader.

Richardson's title is modest—not *the* life, but *a* life. He is warning that this will be an interpretation, not the whole truth, were the whole truth possible in the case of a man for whom the words "truth is a lie" were a personal litany. Even so, it is clear that Richardson has the intention of being as thorough and as exact as possible, and his qualifications for this daunting undertaking are impeccable. He knew Picasso well during the last twenty years of the artist's life, and he enjoyed his trust and encouragement. No less indispensable was the friendship and the cooperation of the artist's widow Jacqueline, who usually guarded her husband and his memory with a jealousy that bordered on paranoia. Richardson has also met many of Picasso's most intimate friends and associates. All these personal connections ensure a high degree of authenticity in the developing account of Picasso's character.

But Richardson is also an art historian and a critic of real distinction. Although he is dazzled by the exceptional being who is his quarry, he is never blinded, and his biography is not hagiography. One is struck throughout this book by his astuteness and his penetration. He points out, for instance, that Picasso was not a colorist by instinct, that he was painfully sensitive to Matisse's predominance in this realm. Richardson recognizes, moreover, that Picasso's years of apprenticeship were precisely that, apprenticeship: the prodigious confidence and the inexhaustible fertility were not innate, they were acquired. Picasso struggled and worked hard. The notebooks bear witness to hundreds of aborted schemes. The thousands of sketches were necessary; they were not creativity for creativity's sake. Indeed, Richardson's shrewd and sensitive accounts of individual works guarantee that one will turn to his book as much for analysis of the art as for information on the life. I cannot think of any other biography of Picasso of which *that* could be said.

Most biographies of Picasso are parsimonious when it comes to illustrations. Here, by contrast, there is an abundance—hundreds of photographs of

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family, lovers, friends, dealers, and patrons, views of the places where Picasso lived and worked, facsimiles of his letters with their piquant caricatures, and (most valuable of all) hundreds of reproductions of often little known paintings, drawings, and sculptures, by him and by others. Arranged in tandem with the text, they tell the story in visual terms; and so this book also represents the best easily available compendium of Picasso's early work. Yet, ever conscious of the unity of Picasso's life and career, Richardson habitually refers forward to later episodes, and some of the most striking pages display side by side, say, a student sketch and an etching from the last decade of his life. (Given the exemplary picture research, it is a pity that the printing is sometimes on the dark and murky side.)

The scholarship throughout is meticulous. By no means all of Picasso's private papers are yet available to scholars, and so modifications to the story told here will doubtless be needed. But Richardson has checked everything that he could check, and referenced admirably all the facts he gives. (A few errors in the captions to the illustrations have crept in.) Not only does he provide a mass of entirely new information, but he definitively explodes many old myths handed down by biographer after biographer and swallowed whole by those who have sought to psychoanalyze the monster-genius. Richardson is admirably skeptical, for example, on the subject of Picasso's earliest work. Picasso used to boast that as a child he already drew like Raphael. But Richardson observes that his academic drawings are neither brilliant nor unusual. And he demonstrates that the stories of Picasso's spectacular entry into the various Spanish art schools that he attended are grossly exaggerated; and also that far from giving up painting in despair, awe-struck by his prodigious teenage son, his father diligently carried on his own painting until well after the turn of the century.

Richardson's first volume spans the years before cubism, from 1881, when Picasso was born in Málaga in southern Spain, to the end of 1906, when he was about to begin work on *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, the huge canvas that Richardson sees, in common with every other writer, as a breakthrough of immense historical significance. The story begins with a fascinating account of Picasso's childhood in a middle-class but hard-pressed family. Picasso's father, Don José Ruiz Blasco, was a rather feckless man, a wholly undistinguished and largely unsuccessful painter who eked out a living by teaching art. His mother, a vivacious and resourceful woman, made her son the center of her life, and he rewarded her by taking her name.

THE ARTIST DRAWING, 1898 (MUSÉE PICASSO, PARIS)

It was a childhood dominated by devoted women. The boy, an only son, was thoroughly spoiled. Everything possible was done to foster his precocious talent, and when he was just 11 Picasso enrolled in classes at the art school in Corunna, where his father held a post. From there he graduated to the art school in Barcelona, before transferring to the academy in Madrid in 1897. But Picasso was fast tiring of the academic grind. Despite his father's disapproval, he returned to Barcelona, where he quickly became absorbed into the thriving avant-garde community that was centered on the café Els Quatre Gats (The Four Cats). Henceforth he identified with Catalonia, not with Spain.

In 1900 came his first trip to Paris, the mecca of Catalan artists; and within a year he was exhibiting there in the gallery of the famous dealer Ambroise Vollard. From this point on the story of Picasso's development is more familiar. Back in Barcelona a tendency to use blue as the dominant color in his paintings was confirmed. This, the universally popular "Blue period," lasted until 1904-05. By then he had settled definitively in Paris, in a studio in the ramshackle artists' community known as the Bateau Lavoir. The "Blue period" gradually gave way to the "Rose period," which culminated in the summer of 1906 with a long and artistically fruitful trip to Barcelona, and to the Catalan mountain village of Gósol. It is with this trip, described in engrossing detail, and with the following autumn in Paris, that Richardson's first volume concludes.

For this volume Richardson has enjoyed the invaluable collaboration of Marilyn McCully, a noted authority on Picasso's early work and on Catalan art at the turn of the century. Their pooled expertise has produced a book that not only charts Picasso's Spanish years in unparalleled detail, but is also an excellent guide to the intricate, and all too little known, network of exchanges between the French and Catalan art worlds from the 1890s onward.

Historically Catalonia and Provence were closely connected, of course. (Catalan is the language spoken on either side of the modern national boundaries.) Outside Spain, however, the names of such artists as Casas, Rusiñol, Nonell, Sunyer, and Casanovas are barely known. Yet those were Picasso's colleagues in his youth, and he owed much to their example. Modernisme, the local Catalan version of symbolism and Art Nouveau, was the house style of Els Quatre Gats (the café was the headquarters of the move-

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ment), and Picasso instantly mastered its idiom when he began to play a leading role there about 1898.

The soulful portraits and the tenebrous genre scenes of Casas and Rusiñol, the luminaries of Els Quatre Gats, influenced his early symbolist paintings. His favorite repertoire during the Blue period—vagrants, beggars, drunks, and prostitutes down on their luck and saddled with sickly children—was essentially a development of the decadent imagery preferred by the Modernistes, and brought him especially close to the spiritual world of Nonell, who was famous for his brooding paintings of gypsies. It was at this time, too, that Picasso first began to appreciate Romanesque and Gothic art and the work of El Greco; in this he was following the lead of Rusiñol, an ardent collector of Catalan medieval ironwork and the proud owner of paintings by El Greco.

To think of Picasso after he settled in Paris in 1904 simply in French terms is seriously to misunderstand his peculiar position. He continued to associate with the large Catalan community there, and he returned to Spain at a number of critical moments throughout his career. Roughly between 1906 and 1911, Modernisme gradually gave way to a new classicist aesthetic that was dubbed Noucentisme, or, roughly, "art of the twentieth century," in which the emphasis shifted to Catalonia's classical heritage and its contribution to the ancient culture of the Mediterranean. There was much excitement, for example, at the new finds made at local archaeological sites such as Ampurias. The doom-ridden urban imagery of Modernisme was gradually replaced by idealized images of the rugged Catalan landscape, of the local farming and fishing communities, and (above all) of the sturdy peasant women.

The figurative conventions of Greco-Roman art and neoclassicism were adopted; and this new orientation within the Catalan avant-garde seems to have been one of the main forces behind Picasso's adoption of a specifically classical style in 1905-06. Although he was living in Paris, he was in contact with Eugeni d'Ors, the leading theorist of Noucentisme. And it was on the recommendation of the sculptor Casanovas that he chose to spend the summer of 1906 in Gósol, in order to experience firsthand the unspoiled peasant way of life. The earthy nudes and the arcadian scenes he painted there, and after his return to Paris, reflect the emerging doctrine of the new movement.

Picasso's first classical period did not last long: by 1907 a new interest in tribal art was leading him toward a much more emotionally expressive and dramatic style, first realized in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*. When he returned to Barcelona for a prolonged visit in 1917, however, he was in a mood to respond once again to the aesthetic of Noucentisme, which was still the dominant voice of modern art in Catalonia. His old friends Sunyer and Casanovas were by now established as the leading exponents of the style in painting and sculpture respectively, and there seems little doubt that renewed contact with them encouraged Picasso to follow up the tentative and sporadic experiments with naturalist styles that he had been making since the beginning of the First World War.

From the time of this trip onward, for the next seven or eight years, he painted simultaneously in a cubist and a "traditional" manner. Even the form of cubism he practiced—clean, precise, flat, and simplified—was the kind most appreciated in Noucentista circles, where cubism was seen as a legitimate, modern expression of the classical tradition. This is not to say that Picasso's classicism in either 1906 or 1917 was wholly the product of his contact with Catalonia. Throughout this period, the Parisian avant-garde was itself absorbed in a parallel "return to order," which also took the form of a return to classical values in art. But the French and the Spanish currents reinforced each other.

Picasso's contacts with his native country did not cease with the end of the First World War. He remained close to his mother and to his surviving sister. His lifelong devotion to the bullfight was also an expression of his sense of national identity. Even at the end of his life, he liked nothing better than to gossip and reminisce with old Catalan friends. In Richardson's pages the Catalan context is rightly restored to its position in the foreground, and we come closer to seeing how Picasso's work took on its distinctive character: he appears no longer as an inexplicable phenomenon, but rather as an artist rooted in an existing tradition. Indeed, Picasso's Spanishness is a dominant theme of the book, and there are many revealing comments on his profound debt to Spanish art, whether to the great Catalan painters of the Romanesque and Gothic periods, to El Greco, or to the "golden age" of Velázquez and his contemporaries.

Every biographer of an artist must believe that biography provides the key. Richardson holds this conviction passionately and subscribes to an essentially psychological view of the motivating forces behind Picasso's art. He has the artist on his side: Picasso often used to say that his work was "like a diary," while the many dramatized self-portraits reflect his fascination with the dynamics of his own personality. Picasso even sanctioned a reading of the changes in his work that stressed their intimate connection with the vicissitudes of his love life, pointing out to Richardson that many of his still lifes were secret portraits of his current mistresses, admitting that their features were sometimes fused with those of a favorite pet.

Thus primed by his subject, Richardson has felt wholly justified in recording as accurately and as fully as possible the story of Picasso as an inveterate womanizer, driven by Spanish *machismo* and the urge, established in childhood, to dominate the women with whom he was involved. Casting aside the lingering discretion that inhibited earlier biographers like Roland Penrose, Richardson describes the dozens of serious and casual love affairs, stressing the constant pattern of infidelity and the tyrannical fits of sexual jealousy that broke out if the boot was on the other foot. (Fernande Olivier, Picasso's first long-term mistress, was not noted for her faithfulness; frantic with suspicion, Picasso would lock her up in his studio in the Bateau Lavoir, and on one occasion she almost burned to death when a fire broke out in the building.)

All this makes for an entertaining and picaresque plot. Still, it will repel as many as it attracts; feminists will feel justified in their antipathy to Picasso's work because it so often openly reflects, in images of violent rape or submissive feminine frailty or gross physical distortion, the lust and the contempt of a man who tended to view women as goddesses or doormats. It is a story that is also bound to foster the kind of crude oversimplification that for years has bedeviled interpretation of the work of Degas, who has suffered from the opposite disgrace of being too inactive as a lover. (Richardson reminds us that Degas, the man and the artist, intrigued Picasso.) Yet the story must be told. For to understand properly the implacable intensity, the flaring drama, and the ferocious energy at the core of Picasso's best and most powerful work, one must recognize the centrality of his eroticism. As Richardson suggests, making love and making art were so closely intertwined in Picasso's private fantasy that impotence in the one risked impotence in the other.

Although he sees Picasso's sexuality as the driving force behind his art, Richardson has as much to say about Picasso's relationships with men, strenuously denying, however, that these were ever of a

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homosexual nature. He considers carefully Picasso's ambivalence toward his father, whose elegant Anglo-Saxon looks and bearing he clearly envied. At first deeply attached to him, Picasso found his failure as an artist both a satisfaction and a stimulus, yet also a terrifying threat. ("In art one must kill one's father," Picasso remarked to a fellow student in Madrid in 1897.)

On the subject of Picasso's friendships with other men Richardson is just as shrewd, pointing out that a pattern was established early in which Picasso would become dependent on the devotion (and the servitude) of a man who was an artist but a weaker artist than himself. Jaime Sabartès, a poet and friend from the Barcelona days who eventually became Picasso's secretary, factotum, and quasi-official biographer, was one of many to accept this ambiguous, self-sacrificial role. I must register a criticism, though: having defined this pattern, Richardson is too dismissive of Picasso's many satellites, most particularly of the Catalans, writing them off as puny and inconsequential. This tends to vitiate his own argument for the Catalan dimension, while it ministers to the pervasive myth, which the book as a whole seeks to qualify, that Picasso was a demigod beyond criticism. Only Jarry, whom Picasso never met, and Apollinaire, who was one of his closest friends, win Richardson's serious respect. It is true that Picasso's Catalan friends were, by any absolute standard, hardly artists of great stature, but harping on their limitations tends to entrench the conventional view that it was only the French who did anything we need bother our heads about.

One of the notebook pages that Richardson reproduces consists almost entirely of imitations of the signatures of Steinlen and Forain, two successful illustrators who influenced Picasso around the time of his first trip to Paris. The notebook dates from about 1899. Richardson comments: "These imitations have nothing to do with forgery. They are about shamanism: Picasso was out to assume the powers of other artists, to assimilate them into his own voracious psyche." This perception, it seems to me, is of extreme importance. In fact, we have here the key to tendencies in Picasso's art that are often misconstrued—his open quotations from other artists, for example, and his rapid, sometimes baffling shifts in style.

If those tendencies were confined to Picasso's early work, no one would be surprised: young artists are expected to thrash around until they find "their" way, "their" style. But Picasso's shifts are an unmistakable feature of his mature work, too, from the beginning of the First World War onward, when he ceased to use the cubist style with any consistency, alternating it with various styles derived from the classical tradition. Indeed, the need to express himself through the art of others became compulsive from the mid-1940s on. Cranach's *David and Bathsheba,* Delacroix's *Women of Algiers,* Poussin's *Rape of the Sabines,* Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe,* and Velázquez's *Las Meninas* were just some of the paintings that suffered obsessive mutations at his hands.

This virtuosity has been highly controversial. For admirers, Picasso was a chameleon; for detractors, a charlatan. The analogy with a shaman is altogether a more subtle and more penetrating avenue of approach, because it allows us to understand that the act of homage was also an act of appropriation. Picasso was measuring himself against his favorite masters of the past and at the same time transforming them into ciphers of himself. Not satisfied with dominating the art of the present—he was by this time widely acknowledged as the towering genius of the century—he sought to possess the whole of the art of the past, to be the incarnation of all of the art of painting.

Yet this was more than megalomania, for Picasso was just as surely trying to bring the past to life, fulfilling literally his own dictum that "to me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot always live in the present it must not be considered at all." Those words were spoken in 1923 to Marius de Zayas, a critic and a poet who had been a member of the Dada circle in New York, at a time when Picasso's shifts in style were already provoking heated debate. He went on to describe the expressive role of style and to defend his own lack of constancy: "I do not believe I have used radically different elements in the different manners I have used in painting. If the subjects I have wanted to express have suggested different ways of expression I have never hesitated to adopt them. . . . This does not imply either evolution or progress, but an adaptation of the idea one wants to express and the means to express that idea."

Using Richardson's notion of Picasso as a shaman, we can see that the origins of this essentially dramatic concept of style—different modes, different masks, different voices—lie in Picasso's experience as an apprentice painter. This, I believe, is what makes his early work so crucial to an understanding of his maturity, and this volume of Richardson's biography so fundamental. A study of the

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illustrations in the book proves that from the start Picasso possessed the talent of mimicry to an uncommon degree. The thorough academic training he underwent, predicated on a doctrine of imitation, was designed to develop this ability, and he had a natural flair for caricature. He also possessed the much rarer talent of commanding the underlying meanings and associations of the various manners that he mimicked. He seems to have comprehended instinctively that style was just as important as iconography to the communication of idea and mood, that variety of style could actually replace variety of iconography—in short, that style could *be* meaning. His "shamanism" had this exceptional dimension.

When Picasso first began to paint in the mid-1890s, genre scenes on uplifting, sentimental themes, executed in an academic realist style and a rich tonal palette, were popular with Salon juries and the bourgeois public. Picasso duly mastered this convention, and as a teenager he won prizes with unexceptional allegorized pictures such as *Science and Charity* (1897), in which a dying woman is ministered to by a doctor and a nun. But this style served less well for portraits concerned with the inner individual as much as the outer one, which were also popular at the time, and so Picasso's portrait of his pious, half-paralyzed, slightly crazed old Aunt Pepa, which was painted about a year before *Science and Charity*, is much more freely handled and is more reminiscent of Rembrandt or Velázquez.

A couple of years later, however, after Picasso had slipped the yoke of his father's influence and joined the radical artistic colony in Barcelona, we find him adroitly adapting for his commercial work the boldly patterned and abstracted style that is instantly identifiable as the common vanguard style for decorative art during the symbolist period. The same ability to adapt to circumstance typifies Picasso's early work in Paris in 1900 and 1901. For semi-caricatural low-life scenes of café-concerts, whores, and pimps he turned to Lautrec, Forain, and Steinlen, but for an expressionist deathbed portrait of his close friend Carles Casagemas, who shot himself over a failed love affair, he adopted the strident color and febrile brushwork of van Gogh. In every one of these cases, the style used has its own network of aesthetic and expressive associations, and Picasso knowingly exploited them in order to deepen, to extend, and to define the meaning of his pictures. In the Casagemas portrait the open reference to van Gogh's style was probably intended to draw a symbolic parallel between the tragic fates of Casagemas and van Gogh. (Richardson points out that Picasso identified with Gauguin, and it may be that his tense relationship with Casagemas reminded him of Gauguin's relationship with van Gogh.)

One can go so far as to speak, in Picasso's case, of the symbolism of style, so important are the associations of the historic styles that he assumed for an understanding of the ideas he wished to convey. But more remarkable still, Picasso's perception that style could be the chief carrier of meaning seems to have led to the perception that complex narrative could be abandoned without any significant loss of emotive power or depth. This in itself was the overriding ambition of the symbolist painters and poets, even if it was an ambition only rarely fulfilled—the desire, that is, to express the idea in purely "abstract," formal terms, without recourse to the narrative imagery and structures of the realists.

One of the fascinations of this volume is to watch first how Picasso shed the realist, narrative conventions in which he made his debut, then how rapidly he embraced the symbolist aesthetic first of Barcelona, then of Paris, and then finally how he realized that he could dispense with the mystificatory imagery of his most ambitious symbolist works, such as the Blue period masterpiece *La Vie* (1903), for something equally suggestive but less specifically "literary." The recognition that he could trust the formal aspects of art seems to have come to him in the later part of 1905 and during 1906. It was probably the consequence of his new interest in the classical tradition that was at that moment enjoying an enthusiastic revival in the art worlds of Paris and Barcelona.

To the avant-garde, classicism did not mean the straight-laced imitation of old favorites, like the Apollo Belvedere, or the tired paraphernalia of academic subject matter. It meant, instead, the solemn sculptural bathers of Cézanne, the stocky Tahitian nudes of Gauguin, and the aesthetic qualities traditionally associated with classical art—purity, simplicity, harmony, abstraction, universality. Those are the qualities with which Picasso invested his new works, especially during and after the critical trip to Gósol in 1906. Picasso had already abandoned the anecdotal and sentimental modern-life imagery of whores and beggars that predominated after 1900 and throughout the Blue period. Now he abandoned the imagery of circus performers and acrobats of 1904 and the first half of 1905 in order to take up timeless, generalized, and "primitive" themes, such as the standing or seated male or female nude.

Richardson's book ends with a reproduction of *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, which was completed in the summer of 1907. The well-known story of its laborious creation is worth recalling in some detail, because it exemplifies the creative odyssey that Picasso had embarked on some ten years earlier. Initially he thought of depicting a brothel scene, not after all so different from those by Degas and Lautrec, or those that he had painted at the turn of the century. His idea was to show the naked whores in a curtained salon, in the company of a lone client (a sailor), and about to be visited by a doctor making the kind of routine medical inspection that was mandatory in licensed brothels on the Continent.

But as he worked on what was always intended to be a semi-allegorical painting, Picasso became convinced that he could dispense with all anecdote and rely on five nudes, a still life of fruit, and an undefined setting to express the fatal magnetism of female sexuality. This was a subject of peculiar force for him; for his compulsion to possess and to master women inevitably involved a kind of thralldom. In this painting it is the women, not Picasso, who dominate, with precisely the implacable black stare one recognizes from so many of the early self-portraits. The crammed, airless spaces of the painting, the sharp contrasts of light and shade, the strident oppositions of hot and cold colors, the spiky geometry of the forms, the shameless confrontation of the defiant faces and naked bodies—all these, Picasso understood, were sufficient to express the ambiguous power-game of sex. Or almost sufficient, for it is crucial to recognize the references Picasso makes—to El Greco, to Manet, to Cézanne, to tribal sculpture—if one is to grasp his intention to introduce the dimension of sacred and profane ritual, and to subvert the established classical tradition of the female nude as the vehicle of idyllic harmony and perfect beauty.

This perception of the drama and the emotive force inherent in style never left Picasso. It stimulated him to make creative use of the extraordinary virtuosity that he commanded and that could easily have mastered him. Whenever he felt the temptation simply to repeat himself, he would remind himself of all the other stylistic options, and set out once more on the adventure of assimilating them and thus invigorating himself through them. This was Picasso's way of avoiding what he came to think of as the stultifying rut of constancy. Change, for

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him, meant renewal and life; constancy meant impotence and death.

There have been few artists more terrified of impotence and death than Picasso. A psychological crisis invariably followed the death of a friend; disease filled him with panic; obsessive images of death in the bullring became a necessary catharsis. This dread of death, and Picasso's many strategies—some frankly superstitious—for warding off the ever present menace, are a leitmotiv of the first part of Richardson's biography, and we will surely meet them again and again in the subsequent three volumes. Let us hope that we do not have to wait too long.

ELIZABETH COWLING, who teaches the history of art at the University of Edinburgh, is the author, with Jennifer Mundy, of *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism, 1910-1930* (Tate Gallery).

The End of the Road

BY MARK EDMUNDSON

The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor by John Barth

(Little, Brown, 573 pp., $22.95)

John Barth's latest novel is what we have come to expect from him, a book that seems to forge a genre of its own. Though it has a few of the trappings of a conventional realistic novel, the trappings don't hold for very long. Verisimilitude falls first and fastest.

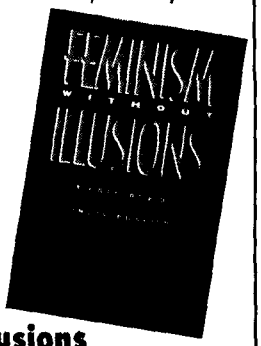
The book takes place in two worlds: one is the world of twentieth-century America in which we follow the life of Simon William Behler from his tenth birthday through love affairs, marriage, the rise and leveling-off of his career as a New Journalist, then finally to a voyage along the legendary route of Sinbad the Sailor. But Behler is narrating his life and times to an audience in medieval Baghdad. He's talking to Sinbad's family, staff, and potential business partners. Somehow Behler has been cast back into time. How did he get there? What does it mean? How will he go home again? All this he hopes to discover through the process of telling his own tales, and listening to Sinbad, who is perhaps his double, narrate *his* legendary voyages.

Every night for six nights running, the denizens of Sinbad's household, along with whatever visitors happen in, gather to hear the two storytellers and to judge their prowess. Following Sinbad's account of his first voyage, in which he loses most of his comrades when they land on an island that turns out to be a whale, there comes the tale of Behler's tenth birthday voyage: his first airplane trip. In Sinbad's second outing, he's saved by lashing himself to a giant roc, whose sole egg he has mistaken for an alabaster temple. For his part, Behler meets Daisy, the book's most engaging character, journeys from sexual innocence to experience, and resolves to make himself, somehow, immortal. After we hear of Sinbad's run-in with an Arabian version of Polyphemus, the one-eyed, man-devouring giant, we get Behler's tale of tumbling through time and space, and winding up, temporarily, in a medieval Arab bazaar—and so on for three trips more, as the protagonists move progressively closer to their encounter in Baghdad. Sinbad tends to look for lucre, while Behler is motivated by what used to be called the quest for identity.

Sinbad's story is lifted without much modification from *The Arabian Nights*. Behler's is generic, a telling of the life of the middle-class male American writer in the middle of the American Century. Our Man, as Barth likes to call him, is married, divorced, conducts affairs, protests the Vietnam War, grows a little famous as a New Journalist. He fails, succeeds, fails at success: a plot with which anyone who has read the picaresque novels of Philip Roth and Saul Bellow has grown familiar.

Barth has said, more than once, that if someone built Chartres Cathedral now, it would be embarrassing unless it were done ironically. If that is true about the building of Chartres, it must be doubly true for the retelling of this now rather conventional story. Still, it is difficult, at least for me, to detect even a mote of irony in Barth's tone. This passage, in which Behler reflects on his own youthful body, is not unrepresentative of the entire book:

"A courageous, clear-sighted book."
—Christopher Lasch, *New Republic*



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> Fourteen! My body pleased me, mostly: wiry, smooth, and sun-browned, still too thin in the chest and upper arms but already broad-shouldered and narrow-hipped and, unlike my brother's stocky build, pushing toward six feet, maybe beyond. The family predicted that I would be its tallest member. My jaw was as hairless as a girl's, subject more to pimples than to whiskers, but I had practiced shaving it with Uncle Josh's expensive prewar Gillette. I wished my voice were deeper, my muscles larger, my pubic hair thicker, my penis more imposing in its flaccid state. Otherwise, however, it was okay, and I assumed that all those improvements would come to pass before long.

The monotony of this passage derives, at least in part, from Barth's unwillingness to open an ironic gap between Behler the storyteller, sitting on a cushion in Sinbad's palace, and the younger self that he is describing. Behler the elder is as uncritical of his little Narcissus scene as the youthful Behler is of his body in the mirror. Tonal irony arises, after all, from the play of two kinds of consciousness, one naive, the other demystified. But throughout Behler's narratives (and Sinbad's too, alas) there is only one mind at work; and it is a rather smug and banal mind at that.

When Behler rises above his habitual flat style, it is to indulge in what one might call the aesthetic of the cute. He's most himself when he's offering a bland turn of phrase ("They had had a real couple of years, but they weren't a real couple"); or a saccharine conjunction (aboard ship Behler and his girlfriend "made meals and love"); or a fractured quotation (" 'The best *planned* lays, as we say in Little Italy, gang aft a-gley. Capisce?' ") There is no indication from Barth that we ought to admire Behler for this sort of thing any less than he admires himself.

But what about the larger irony that can arise from the collision of two incompatible worlds? Doesn't the encounter between twentieth-century America and medieval Islam produce an absorbing and instructive dissonance? Here is a representative example of one of Sinbad's Arab guests criticizing Behler's latest narrative installment:

> The high ground of traditional realism, brothers, is where I stand! Give me familiar, substantial stuff: rocs and rhinoceri, ifrits and genies and flying carpets, such as we all drank in with our mothers' milk and shall drink—Inshallah!—till our final swallow. Let no outlander imagine that such crazed fabrications as machines that mark the hour or roll themselves down the road will ever take the place of our homely Islamic realism, the very capital of narrative—from which, if I may say so, all interest is generated.

It will be hard for those who remember the verbal flights in *Giles Goat-Boy* or *The End of the Road* to believe it, but this is as witty as Barth gets in *The Last Voyage.* Time after time he tries to score points by depicting the Arabs as dim provincials. In doing so, he indulges what is most provincial in himself and his readers: their ugly and worn stereotypes of a foreign culture.

But perhaps the play between the two worlds, Behler's and Sinbad's, is indirectly rendered. Barth certainly keeps himself busy planting clues that encourage us to think so. The ankle bracelet that Behler's first lover, Daisy, wears turns up in Baghdad on Sinbad's daughter Yasmin. Not much later the bracelet motif arises again after Behler has lost his watch: "The sight of that naked bracelet of white on his left wrist, echoing the white band of his wife's toplessness, made him almost dizzy." Bracelet imagery travels the length of the book, focusing the reader's attention and soliciting interpretation. The fact that the bracelets are themselves often composed of discrete links makes them a likely image for conjunction, for narrative linkage, so the reader strains to do the appropriate work.

And yet, at least for me, these clues simply yield no revelations. Daisy and Yasmin are entirely different sorts of characters. The recurrence of the bracelet doesn't lead to any unexpected continuity between them, anymore than hearing the tale of Sinbad's encounter with the roc helps one comprehend Behler's airplane flight or his sexual initiation. Nor is Barth using clues in the sophisticated way that Thomas Pynchon did in *The Crying of Lot 49.* There the heroine, Oedipa, is on the trail of what she takes to be the Tristero conspiracy, but all of her detective work, we are given to speculate, may be a defense against perceiving some ultimate vacuum. This speculation, though, arises from the many clues that Pynchon leaves *us.* Thus he transforms his readers into doubles of his (possibly) paranoid heroine, compelling us to confront our own obsessive need for explanatory fictions. Barth's book doesn't read the reader in anything like the way Pynchon's does.

What *are* the clues doing in *The Last Voyage?* One might speculate that Barth is trying to keep his readers off balance by implying the existence of some very sophisticated subtext that they are too dull-witted to see. The book works to undermine the reader's confidence, and to make him believe that he's not smart enough to make a judgment, to close this book and go on to something else. But there is another explanation for the book's pretensions to high literary status, an explanation that leaves Barth looking no less cynical, though maybe a touch more appealingly mischievous.

The six-night structure does lend itself quite nicely to one design, and it may in fact be the book's chief one. Every night, after the dismal stories, there comes the sex scene. In the middle of the novel there is an orgy sequence that features a dive into a sudsy laundry tub with guests and harem girls, slop, soap, smell of frankincense, bacchic chorus of pipes and tambourines. (" 'Gentlemen!' Sinbad protested. 'Does none among you wish his laundry done? No need to remove it; simply join our able laundress in her tub!' ") After this sequence, the sex tends to be between couples, but always with a fresh kink.

The nightly escalation routine may be the real formal impulse of the book—which is to say that the structure that matters here isn't metafictional at all. Barth is borrowing his techniques from pornographic films, which are structured like Gene Kelly musicals, except that people break into sex rather than song. The first sex scene in a porn movie is likely to involve the missionary position, and the average musical kicks off with a duet. Then things escalate. Every interlude tops the last one until the final production number, in which the director goes ineluctably over budget.

And that is how Barth puts together

What Scenery Looks Like from a Helicopter

Dried beans. It all looks like dried beans
glued to a styrofoam platter. Here love
begins its kindergarten.

Don't think I abandon you,
though I do. God, that's pompous.
You know words rush when the local peaches
peak and every bite

unleashes Niagaras. Listen—
you hear everything.

No one else so shares the world with me,
the newscast in your eyes made all that clear.

Our city hall is leaking. Good night,
Mrs. McGillicuddy, wherever you are.

Michael Lynch

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The Last Voyage. The metafictional pretensions surround the book with a cloud of respectability beneath which the reader can enjoy some of the satisfactions of soft-core porn. How many readers *will* enjoy it is another matter. The sex scenes are unmistakably the creations of a man who seems to believe that phallic worship is the true feminine religion. Thus Yasmin reflects on Behler's immortal "*zabb*": "Had there ever been . . . a softer, silkier little Beel-Beel than the one she was now toweling, which just minutes past had stood like a minaret pointing her to Paradise? Really, she believed she loved it as much when it was Sayyid Tom-Thumb as when it rose and swelled like an uncorked genie." And he of the uncorked genie is, naturally, a lover without parallel, provoking orgasms "prompt and formidable" in his array of mistresses.

When Daisy grows old and mad, there's nothing to worry about: her younger sister Julia appears on the scene, warm and ready (naturally). Real conflict is, all through the book, kept to a minimum: one is never at pains to figure out what the protagonists ought to have done in a given situation. Suppose Daisy had returned later in life, rather than the bubbly surrogate sister; or that Behler had been a Jew, not a generic American Protestant, in the kingdom of the Arabs. But Barth doesn't want that kind of complexity. His novel is written by that self-satisfied boy gazing in a mirror where everything is shining and smooth: no conflict, no threats, nothing truly alien.

Thus Barth uses a potentially quite alien world, the medieval Orient, as a place to throw a 1950s-style American stag party. His Arab men are lusty, greasy misogynists, always prattling about *zabbs* and *wâhâts*. The women are sultry, sexy, belly-dancer types. *The Last Voyage* is squarely within the tradition of cultural perception and misperception that has been called Orientalism. (I leave open the question of the relations between Barth's fantasies and contemporary American conceptions of Arab states and Arab peoples. Condemning Barth as a promulgator of a vicious ideology has its appeal and its justice, but this sort of criticism, whatever its social goals, puts one in the same moralizing relation to literature as, say, Jerry Falwell.)

Barth's Orient, like Flaubert's and Byron's, is a place for Western sexual fantasies to come true, a sort of Disneyland for "libertines." The Orient in the nineteenth century was the place not just for swarthy women, but also for boys, but there Barth draws the line. The gay page boy in Sinbad's household is threatened with castration every chapter or so. All the sex here is wholesomely heterosexual. These are the sort of imaginings that would have transpired if you'd slipped opium into Ward Cleaver's pipe.

What has happened to John Barth? One explanation arises from the work of Tony Tanner, probably Barth's best academic critic. Tanner's discussion of Barth in *City of Words*, his admirable study of American fiction that appeared in 1971, runs up as far as *Lost in the Funhouse*, that is, until 1968, through what one might call Barth's major period. Tanner's view is that for Barth a will to verbal play frequently takes priority over a sustained interest in mimesis. It's not just that he works out of a sophisticated despair at the possibility of representing reality accurately, of getting it right once and for all. Many writers, of course, share that orientation; but Barth progressively loses interest in the tensions between the world and the stories that we concoct about it.

He doesn't seem to care very much which fictions might illuminate experience and which might be solipsistic or frivolous. In *Giles*, for example, Barth hit on the idea of reconceiving American society as one vast university. The conceit works in part because it demonstrates how much the structures of authority in the liberal environment of the university might mirror, and perhaps even help to create, a subtly authoritarian, pervasively conformist American culture. The possibilities latent in Barth's parallel come out in the aptly named Bray's prayer to the Learned Founder who is, among other things, the humanist's God:

> Learned Founder! Liberal Artist! Dean of deans and Coach of coaches, to whose memos we still turn in time of doubt: stand by us through these dark hours in Academe! Teach me, that am Thy least professor, to profess no thing but truth. . . . Be with each co-ed at the evening's close: paw her with facts, make vain her protests against learning's advances; take her to Thy mind's backseat, strip off preconceptions, let down illusions, unharness her from error—that she may ere the curfew be infused with Knowledge . . . . Doctor of doctors, vouchsafe unto me examples of the Unexampled, words to speak the Wordless; be now and ever my visual aid, that upon the empty slate of these young minds I may inscribe, bold and squeaklessly, the Answers!

Bray's speech, which goes on for twice this length, does a fine job of exposing, among other things, the complex interplay of sex and domination that may suffuse the disinterested art of pedagogy as much as it suffuses the supposedly fallen realms of corporate and professional life.

Giles contains any number of equally impressive moments in which pieties of

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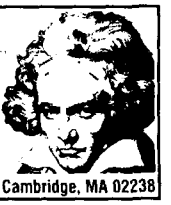

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various sorts receive their due detonation, but there are also stretches of incomparably dull writing. At one point Barth decides to rewrite *Oedipus Rex* with a dean playing the central role. The result, as one might expect, is absurdly predictable and overdetermined (which doesn't stop Barth from committing more space to Oedipus than Sophocles did). Barth strives throughout *Giles* to assimilate all manner of cultural matter and to channel it through his authorial voice, to submit it to his reigning conceits. Frequently, as in the revision of *Oedipus*, he's self-centered enough to be interested more in his powers of literary appropriation than in his readers' needs for stories, or for reflections on the uses of stories, that have some points of contact with experience.

On the occasion of his new novel, one might speculate that Barth's disdain for readers is no longer partial. The buoyant sense of superiority that encouraged him to follow his own obsessions seems to have withered into a pervasive cynicism about his readers, and about the powers of literature. Barth's work has always been shot through with some measure of misanthropy. In the earlier novels it took the form of a high-spirited derision for the systems—philosophical, literary, political, social—by which people tried to force stable meanings into experience. Now it seems that Barth has given up, and become a rancorous rather than a vital misanthrope, indulging ugly prejudices, racial and sexual. At the same time, he's using a form that pretends his old iconoclastic energies are still active. If this book proves to be a success, the worst that Barth thought about us in *Giles* will have had some confirmation. That may be the book's only irony, but it is perhaps the most troubling one that Barth has yet produced.

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

great structural engineer Robert Maillart (Washington Diarist, "Poached," March 11): Should Mr. Sullivan wish to try his hand at satire, he should at least get his names straight. (He refers to *Paul* Maillart.) Also, one would never know from his condescending remarks that this is one of the most beautifully illustrated books of the spring season.

VICTORIA NEWHOUSE
New York, New York

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TRB *continued from page 4*

his memoirs is his legendary work for DuPont in 1962, saving the company hundreds of millions (big money back then) with a specially legislated tax break.

Influence peddling is rarely as crude as making a phone call (though Clifford did make that phone call for BCCI, effectively stifling a congressional investigation of BCCI's drug money laundering by ringing up Senator Claiborne Pell). Sometimes it is a matter of what lobbyists like to call "access": opening the right door so that the client can make his own case. Sometimes it actually is what Clifford insists in his memoirs, merely "advice on how best to present your position to the appropriate departments and agencies." Sometimes it is more ephemeral yet: mere propinquity—the right to say, "Clark Clifford represents me." Whatever the specific service being rendered, however, clients are paying to tip the balance of democratic government in their favor. And a lot of the time (though not always), they're getting their money's worth.

To help it out of its current mess, First American has hired Patton, Boggs & Blow, the law firm of the present chairman of the Democratic Party, Ron Brown. Patton, Boggs is just the sort of large modern law firm that Clark Clifford sticks up his nose at. But much of its business is essentially the same as Clifford's: trading on influence. In the franker modern style, Brown and his partners no doubt spare their clients that sanctimonious little speech. And there may be less emphasis on respectability and more on raw connections. But the principle, or lack thereof, is the same.

Brown's been in the news lately too. He's a board member and stockholder of a Louisiana company called Chemfix Technologies, which contracts with cities to turn sewage into landfill. *Newsday* reports that New York City awarded Chemfix a $210 million contract about the same time the Democrats chose New York as the site of their next convention, and despite complaints from other cities that Chemfix's operations "stunk to high heaven."

Since a federal ban on ocean dumping of sewage in 1988, the sewage conversion business has become highly politicized. Rival firms have hired Tip O'Neill's son and Al D'Amato's brother. There is absolutely no evidence that Ron Brown ever called up Mayor Dinkins and said, "If you want the convention, give me the sludge contract." But that's not how it works. There's only one reason a Louisiana sewage company would want a Washington lawyer high in Democratic politics on its board, and it's not because of his knowledge of sewage.

Brown is a lobbyist for several Japanese electronics firms, as well as for AUTOPAC, the trade group for imported car dealers. He has represented the Sultan of Oman. Jack Anderson reported in 1988 that for most of the 1980s Brown had a $150,000-a-year contract to represent the Haitian government of Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier. Brown told Anderson he had "apprehensions" about this, but thought he could "do more harm than good." Among other services, Brown helped the dictator's brother-in-law deal with an arrest for drug trafficking. Brown's contract with Haiti ended shortly after Baby Doc fled the country one step ahead of the lynch mob.

In 1986 NBC agreed with a group called the National Black Media Coalition to sell one of its radio stations to a minority-controlled firm. In 1989 it sold Washington station WKYS to a company of which Brown owns 10 percent. NBC got a special tax break designed to make it easier for minorities to afford to buy broadcast stations. NBC also lent the buyers part of the purchase price. Brown has consistently refused to say how much of his own money he had to put up for a share of a broadcast property that is worth many millions.

Brown got this deal because he is black, but not just because he is black. He got it because he is one of Washington's most prominent and politically influential blacks. Having Ron Brown in your minority group when you're trying to obtain a broadcast license is like having Clark Clifford on your board when you're trying to get approval from bank regulators.

Someday Ron Brown may be regarded as "the Democratic Party's pre-eminent wise man." Is that progress? It's sad that Washington's Democratic graybeards have tended to be men who built fortunes peddling their influence: Clark Clifford . . . Robert Strauss . . . Ron Brown. . . .

Of course many prominent Republicans have done the same. Indeed, it was Republicans who pioneered most of the grossest excesses of influence peddling during the innovative 1980s, stripping away the delicate veneers painstakingly maintained over decades by the Clark Clifford types. But you expect Republicans to be whores for business, and to be cynical about the processes of government. For a Republican politico to be available for hire may be equally corrupt, but it is less hypocritical.

Anyway, for the Republicans now—as for the Democrats during Clark Clifford's prime—it doesn't matter so much. But it's different if you're a party in desperate need of redefining yourself in your own mind and the public's. In that situation, it's a substantial disadvantage when your so-called leaders and wise men can be bought by anyone who walks in the door with enough money.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The milk can

THE INVITATION TO LECH WAlesa's appearance at the site of the Holocaust Museum was irresistible, a promise of collision. And the incompleteness of the site was the perfect physical emblem for the historical relationship that was being awkwardly addressed that afternoon, for the entanglement of Jews with Poles that will never be ended and never be healed. The beams and the girders among which we sat beneath the open sky looked now like construction, now like destruction; now like foundations, now like ruins. The true student of the extermination of the European Jews knows the way that buildings can sometimes look like the early form of ruins. The subject, in short, derails. It certainly derailed many of the assembled at 14th and Independence. The collision that occurred was rather more complicated than the collision I anticipated. The Poles collided with the Jews, and they all collided with . . . a milk can.

THE ORGANIZERS HAD PLACED the milk can to the side of the small stage, in the shadow of the Polish flag, under a gloomy gray drape, and Walesa removed the drape when he presented it to the museum. It was a cheesy moment, until the drape came down. I don't think that I have ever been so struck by the charisma of an object. The milk can was about three feet tall. It was almost sensuously rusted, and the brown on its tortured surface turned to gold as the sun lowered in the sky. It was sealed shut, with a mechanism that had the premonitory shape of a sickle. It sat silently in its clear plastic container, the aspic of historical consciousness. Sat silently, but subversively: as the proceedings wore on, the milk can shamed them, towered above them, mocked the platitudes, Polish and Jewish, that they were convened to confirm, restored the material integrity of the catastrophe, established the facticity that defeats language as completely as metal defeats light.

THE MILK CAN ONCE BELONGED to Emmanuel Ringelblum. It was one of the three milk cans in which his archives of the Warsaw Ghetto, and his own *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, were buried for safety sometime in the spring of 1943, shortly before the Jews of the ghetto revolted because they wished to die *their* way. Walesa explained a little haltingly about Ringelblum. It was clear that he was unaware of the magnitude of his subject. For Ringelblum was, like Marc Bloch, a holy man of history, the Jewish intellectual and activist who brought Clio to hell, who organized the rigorous documentation of the ghetto, cleaving macabrely to the modern methodologies for the study of a social group, which the Jews in Europe in the early 1940s certainly were. Ringelblum was one of the leaders of the resistance. On March 7, 1944, he was shot, with his wife and his child, in the ghetto's ruins. On December 1, 1950, two of the milk cans that held his materials were found. On March 21, 1991, the president of Poland came with one of the milk cans to seek the understanding of the Jews.

BUT WALESA JUST COULDN'T FIND the right Weizsäcker-ish tone. He spoke about Jews and Poles, and about "the Jewish and Polish nations," but never about Jewish Poles or Polish Jews. He referred to "the unimaginable tragedy into which the Nazis put the Jews and the Poles," as if the tragedies were the same, as if Poles played no part in the tragedy of Polish Jews. He spoke, I think sincerely, about the "moral obligation" of the Poles "to fight against anti-Semitism and xenophobia," but later in his visit insisted that what would bring the Poles closer to the Jews was "commerce." In sum, he displayed a gift for allaying suspicions in terms that confirmed suspicions. It was a little comic. I was reminded of a Texan gentleman I once met at a bar in Cambridge, an energy consultant for the State Department, who insisted that the United States must support Israel because the Jews are, after Aramco, the most powerful organization in the Middle East. There is a certain kind of respect for Jews of which only anti-Semites are capable.

I CARP ABOUT WALESA NOT BEcause he is a Pole, but because he is a Pole who, as he admitted in Washington, "myself stepped on the anti-Semitic land mine." He was referring to the demagoguery of his presidential campaign, though his confession was typically qualified by its metaphor. (Land mines are traps set for you by others.) Nor do I believe that the Solidarity revolution stands or falls on its feelings about Jews, though its feelings about Jews will tell how far it has freed itself from the dark spots in Poland's political culture that cannot be attributed to communism. For a Jew, the Polish attitude toward the Jews doesn't really matter anymore. The Polish chapter of Jewish history is over. We can be insulted, but we cannot be damaged; and our thoughts are beyond anybody's reach. For a Pole, however, the fight for pluralism is a matter of moral and political life and death. And which Jew would not bless a fight for pluralism?

THE AFTERNOON'S grotesquerie, however, was not all Walesa's. Quite the contrary. A Polish lack of familiarity with the disaster was the guest of a Jewish excess of familiarity with the disaster. The event near the Mall confirmed me in my sense that the Holocaust has become, for the American Jewish community, an old shoe. One woman was introduced to a friend of mine, a woman who survived Auschwitz, as "one of your inmates," which put me in mind of a recent invitation to an academic conference on the Holocaust in which one of the participants was described as a "DP camp alumnus." Banality is such balm. The Jews at the museum site mingled, gossiped, issued press releases ("For Immediate Release: U.S. Holocaust Museum Acquires Ringelblum Milk Can"), spoke to reporters, admired each other's finery, felt strong. I would have thought that the sight of the milk can would make a Jew weak. The chairman of the event exulted in Walesa's formation of a "blue-ribbon Task Force" to combat anti-Semitism. I half expected to hear David Packard introduced. Then "distinguished survivors" were invited to a private meeting with the president. Who are the undistinguished survivors?

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE past is a fine anesthetic against the pain of the past. The Holocaust Museum, I think, will prove the proposition hourly. Still, now and then, a shock will get through. When the meeting broke up, the milk can was left alone on the stage. It was the very image of unassimilability. A few serious souls in the crowd came up for a closer look and drifted away. It had held its secret. In the dusk, it fairly glowed.

LEON WIESELTIER

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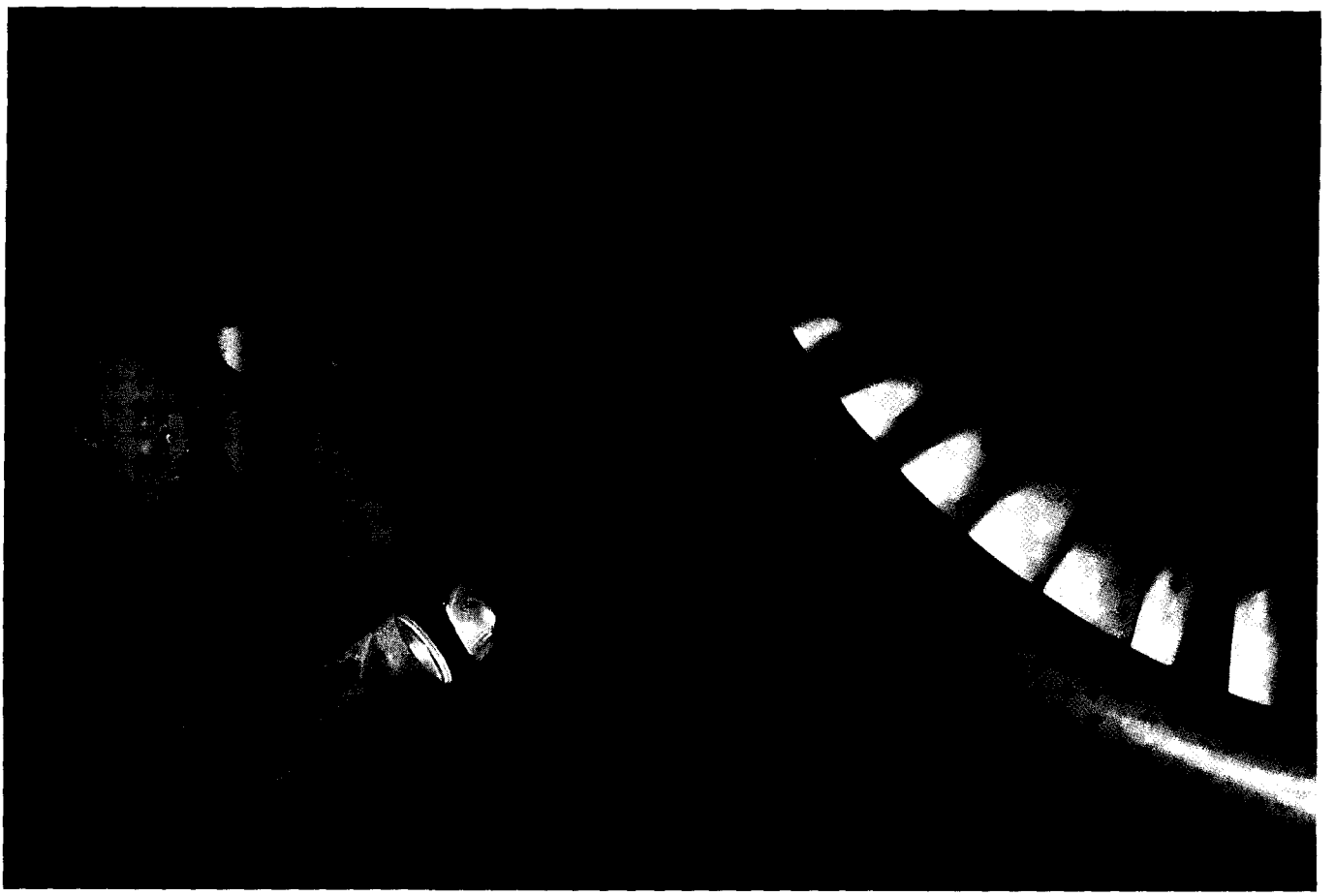

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